RELIEF TEACHING FOR TASMANIAN EDUCATION:

PERSPECTIVES, POLICIES AND PRACTICES

by

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Declaration

Except as stated herein, this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to provide a reasonably comprehensive study of the policies and practices of relief teaching in Tasmania. This has entailed looking at the broader context of policies and practices in this field in Australia and the United States, whilst focussing more closely upon the Tasmanian experience. As a consequence it has been necessary to obtain data from a variety of sources which include a literature review, examination of official files, information collected from state and territory departments and teacher unions, discussions with retired teachers and structured interviews with relief teachers.

The literature, which focusses mainly on the employment of relief teachers in the United States of America, tends to suggest that relief teaching has a depressive effect on childrens' education because these teachers are rarely effective in their substitute role. The implication is that relief teachers are not entirely to blame for their ineffectiveness in moving student learning forward. It has been suggested that there is a need for school staff and relief teachers to form a working relationship whereby problems relating to relief teaching can be identified and more effectively addressed.

A somewhat different perspective is apparent in Tasmania. From information contained in files held by the Department of Education and the Arts and interviews with retired teachers it is apparent that the factor most likely have an adverse affect on student learning is the unavailability of relief teachers. There is evidence to suggest that financial limitations placed on the employment of relief teachers has been a major factor and is considered to be the cause of significant interruption to continuity of student learning.

From information provided by education authorities and teacher unions, it might be inferred that schools throughout Australia are able to call upon well-qualified and experienced relief teachers whose expertise is likely to be of assistance in maintaining students' academic progress. Moreover, it is likely that the utilisation of these teachers has the capacity to enhance the productivity of regular teachers because it reduces the stress regular teachers are likely to incur when workloads are increased through internal supervision. While education authorities admit that problems can arise, most appear to believe that the benefits of employing relief teachers outweigh the disadvantages.

The issues within the literature relating to relief teaching provided the basis for the construction of an interview schedule which was subsequently used to elicit information and assess the range of concerns relevant to relief teaching in Tasmania. Subsequent to the collection and categorisation of data obtained from the interviews, chi-square tests were performed using the Macintosh StatView program. From the results of the tests, it has been ascertained that there are statistically significant differences when years of teaching experience and the grade level in which the relief teacher works are correlated with several issues relating to relief teaching.

Test results indicate that the individual's perception of the role of the relief teacher is likely to be influenced by the grade level in which a teacher works. The majority of teachers working in the primary school are likely to perceive the role as one of providing their own educationally valid activities and lesson plans. Secondary school teachers generally see the role as that of maintaining learning programs which are currently being taken by the regular teacher.

The grade level in which a teacher works is likely to have some bearing on the kinds of assistance relief teachers require to teach effectively. The majority of primary teachers believe information about school and class routines is important, while a small majority of those in the secondary area are likely to opt for assistance with behaviour strategies.

When years of full-time and relief teaching experience were correlated with students' perceptions about the authority of relief teachers, it was found that subjects with less than ten years experience were the group most likely to believe students perceive them as lacking in authority. This group also feel the greatest need for orientation and training programs which specifically relate to relief teaching.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Relief teachers employed to cover the classes of absent teachers are expected, by education authorities and schools, to continue educational programs, and minimise disruptions through the maintenance of discipline and class routines (Drake, 1981 and Frosch, 1984). However, personal experience and discussions with colleagues, disclosed that a number of factors, including problems with students, and lack of information and assistance from school staff, were likely to hinder relief teachers in achieving these objectives. The negative experiences of myself and others, combined with the lack of job satisfaction, prompted this investigation into the policies and practices of relief teaching, with the emphasis on the Tasmanian situation.

A review of relevant studies, which generally relate to relief teaching in the United States of America, revealed that relief teachers are considered unlikely to be effective in their substitute roles (Rawson, 1981, Frosch, 1984 and Shreeve et al, 1987). Consequently, researchers have expressed concern that students' academic progress is likely to be adversely affected (Drake, 1981, Meara, 1983 Benedict, 1987 and Johnson et al, 1988). This study begins, in chapter 1, by examining, in detail, previous research relating to the increasing employment of relief teachers, their effectiveness and subsequent impact on student learning, attitudes of students, school staff and administrators towards them, the effects of lack of role definition, the need for specialised training and the support available to relief teachers, and information and advice for relief teachers.

The literature relating to this subject appears to be unexpectedly limited in quantity, with much of the evidence being anecdotal in nature. Because researchers have expressed such a degree of concern about the effectiveness of relief teachers and the effect on student learning, it is surprising that these problems have not been investigated more thoroughly through some kind of empirical research.

An application was made to the Tasmanian Education Department for

information relating to relief teaching in the state. Interviews with representatives of this department produced limited information as official records in relation to such aspects as the number of absences of regular teachers and the number of days relief teachers were employed in any given year, policies relating to employment of these teachers and problems associated with the work were not available. However, access was provided to files relating to relief teaching.

To provide an overview of the policies and practices of relief teaching in Tasmania, interviews with former teachers, information from Education Department files and newspaper articles have been combined, in chapter 2, to present a perspective of relief teaching in this state from 1929 to 1992. This includes an outline of internal supervision from pre-World War 2 to 1970, absent teacher substitution from 1970 onwards, views of educators and professionals in relation to the availability of relief teachers, the effects of lack of finance for the employment of relief teachers, the demand for and supply of these teachers, and their qualifications and salaries.

Although a search was conducted, material or research of an academic nature relating to relief teaching in Australia was not uncovered. Nonetheless, a broad view of relief teaching in this country was obtained through correspondence with education departments, ministries, teachers' federations and unions about policies and working conditions for these teachers. The appointment of relief teachers, preferred roles, working conditions, problems, background, gender, experience, qualifications, wages and employment opportunities are examined in the third chapter. Difficulties were experienced because some of the information lacked specificity and some education authorities and teacher unions had to be contacted several times before the relevant details could be obtained.

While authors in the United States of America appear concerned that the effect of relief teachers on student learning may be deleterious, information from education authorities throughout Australia reflects a somewhat different perspective. It is likely that the relief teacher program is supported throughout this country because these teachers are seen as facilitating schools' ability to minimise interruptions and

continue student learning programs. In fact, evidence from Tasmanian Education Department files and former Tasmanian teachers indicates that the unavailability of relief teachers is likely to have an adverse effect on student learning.

Although, on the surface, correspondence and memoranda from Education Department files suggest relief teachers in Tasmania are considered a valuable resource in the maintenance of school routines and learning programs, the experiences of some relief teachers raise questions about underlying problems related to this work. Therefore, it seemed that some investigation, of the perceived problems of relief teachers, was warranted. Hence, a suitable instrument had to be designed and tested to assess the range of concerns about and problems inherent in relief teaching in Tasmania.

While authors have not backed their claims with scientific evidence, the issues presented within the literature provided a basis for the construction of a questionnaire to be used to elicit information about attitudes towards relief teaching. The pilot study and subsequent evaluation, described in chapter 4, revealed that an interview schedule, containing a greater number of open-ended questions and biased towards the collection of qualitative data, would be more suited to the exploratory nature of this study. This chapter includes the development of a questionnaire, the rationale for a change to an interview format based on the propositions within the questionnaire, the hypotheses, significance of the study, description of the subjects, independent and dependent variables, procedures for administering the interview schedule and the use of the Macintosh Statview program for the analysis of data.

Following the development and trialling of the interview schedule, forty relief teachers, currently working in a variety of schools in the greater Hobart area, volunteered to be interviewed. The ten male and thirty female subjects, teaching in schools where the socio-economic backgrounds of students range from lower to upper, work in areas from kindergarten to grade twelve. Their full-time teaching experience ranged from 0 to 40 years and time spent as relief teachers spanned between 6 months to 26 years. Years of teacher training varied between

2 and 4 years.

The interview schedule facilitated the collection of a substantial amount of qualitative data, as well as some quantitative, which served to illustrate the problems and concerns of a small sample of the population of Tasmanian relief teachers. Because this study seeks to ascertain whether variables such as gender, training, teaching experience, the socio-economic background of students and the reasons for undertaking relief teaching, affect teachers' perceptions, the qualitative data was categorised for the purposes of statistical analysis. As well as the provision of information about statistically significant results, in combination with qualitative data from the interviews, chapter 5 examines interesting trends suggested by the contingency tables.

In chapter 6, a comparative evaluation was then made between the data obtained from the survey, the perceptions of authors of the literature, retired Tasmanian teachers, education authorities and teachers' federation representatives. This review includes comparisons about the perceived attitudes of administrators, staff and students, the role, effectiveness, and factors causing anxiety in relief teachers, training for relief teaching and the provision of assistance by school staff to enable these people to teach effectively. From this, conclusions have been drawn and recommendations are made in relation to a more efficient utilisation of relief teachers, a realistic role definition, integration with the educational community and opportunities for orientation and training for relief teaching

As this study is likely to be the first of its kind in Tasmania, the task was seen as that of bringing together a miscellany of information, gathered from diverse sources, into a cohesive document. However, it is hoped that despite or because of this variety of sources it is able to contribute to a better understanding of the policies and practices of relief teaching and perhaps to an improvement in its provision, and thus most importantly, to more effective student learning.

CHAPTER 1

A REVIEW OF RELEVANT STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

> ***Theoretically, a substitute teacher would be defined as a certified and qualified professional who replaces the regular classroom teacher for the purpose of continuing the instructional program, maintaining discipline and generally promoting the educational welfare of the students.***
>
> ***(Drake 1981, p.75)***

Evidence suggests that there is little relationship between the theory, as enunciated by Drake, and the practice of relief teaching. The relevant literature, as well as personal experience, indicates that relief teachers are likely to be considered by administrators and school staff as being rarely effective in facilitating students' academic progress. Much of this literature is recent, having been written from 1980 onwards and, as indicated within the chapter, mainly relates to the employment and working conditions of relief teachers in the United States of America. Some comments from Australian authors are also included. Generally, the authors have commented on the problems of relief teachers, the attitudes of students towards them, and the ways in which administrators, regular teachers and relief teachers can work together more effectively.

The effectiveness of the relief teacher is likely to be negated by a variety of factors. Some investigators note that relief teachers face many problems, especially when they are frequently called upon to teach at short notice (Hayes, 1975 p.271, Clifton et al, 1985, p.67, Hemmings, 1985, p.11, Augustin, 1987, p.394, and Holcombe et al, 1988, p.89). These teachers are likely to have little or no knowledge about the students or the current curriculum or may be unable to find lesson plans, timetables, class registers, information on classroom management, school rules and policies. To compound these problems, lunch order forms must be filled in and money and forms for a variety of activities may have to be collected before lessons can be organised. Therefore, if these obstacles are to be overcome, the attitudes of administrators, staff and students are likely to have some bearing on relief teacher effectiveness.

This chapter reviews in detail the need for effective relief teachers and the factors which are likely to reduce their effectiveness and therefore

affect student learning. These factors include attitudes of administrators, regular school staff, students and relief teachers themselves, and the lack of and need for relief teacher training. A review of the literature relating to advice for schools and relief teachers is included.

I intend to review available relevant studies which might help in both the description and assessment of the policies and practices of relief teaching in Tasmania in recent years. I have treated the terms 'substitute' and 'relief' as being interchangeable.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF RELIEF TEACHERS

There appears to be an increasing demand for relief teachers in the United States of America and one educator assesses thousands of relief teachers are employed every day throughout that country (Davis, 1980, p.36). This may be due, in part, to better provisions for sick leave. Johnson et al (1988, p.89) report that as teacher contracts in the United States of America provide more personal, professional and sick leave so the need to employ relief teachers increases. Unfortunately, no statistics or evidence are provided in either article to support these claims.

Findings in a study of teacher absences over a three year period undertaken by the Chicago Panel on Public School Finances (Meara, 1983, pp.6-8 and pp.15-19) indicated that teachers in the Chicago District use ten of the thirteen leave days allotted to them. At the time of the study, as a result of these absences, $10-11 million a year had been expended in direct payroll costs for relief teachers. Many of the teacher absences were attributed to illnesses caused by exposure to influenza and cold viruses as well as days used for personal business.

In Australia, there is also evidence to suggest that there has been a need to employ an increasing number of relief teachers over the past two decades. While providing no substantive evidence, Hemmings (1985, p.10) considers that there is an increase in the supply of and demand for relief teachers to cover the absences of permanent teachers who are temporarily out of action, generally through illness.

Additional information from New South Wales and Tasmania supports Hemmings, although no statistical evidence is provided to indicate the extent of these absences. Barcan (1977, pp.156-157) reports that in New South Wales, in 1975, teachers were utilising much of their sick leave,

evidence of this being the number of free periods secondary school pupils were given each week. He comments that in some schools the casual teachers, who are paid by daily attendance, are the most reliable members of staff and provide a necessary support for the school.

Further corroboration was presented during a Tasmanian Industrial Commission hearing. One principal estimated that two-thirds of relief days were used to cover teachers absent through illness while teacher development and seminars accounted for one quarter of these days. One of the witnesses estimated that his school required the services of a relief teacher on an average of one to two times per week (Tasmanian Industrial Commission, 1987, p.798 and p.816).

Leave for professional development activities in Tasmania, as was reported for the United States of America (Johnson et al, 1988, p. 89), led to the need for more relief teachers in the sixties and seventies (Journals and Printed Papers of the Parliament of Tasmania, 1968, p.15 and The Department of Education and Youth Affairs, 1984, p.10). However, in Tasmania, during the 1990's, there has been a decrease in the opportunities for in-service training within school hours because of a general reduction in funding for education (Mercury, 24 September, 1990, p.2).

THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE RELIEF TEACHERS

The implication of this increase in teacher absenteeism is that relief teacher effectiveness is crucial if students' academic progress is to continue. Although not substantiated quantitatively, McIntire et al (1982, p.702) claim that the average student, in the United States of America, spends seven days of every school year with a relief teacher. If a child attends school for twelve years, this amounts to nearly half a school year. Other figures are provided by Drake (1981), who states that, "Published reports have shown that the statistically average student will have 10 of their total classroom days each year supervised by a substitute teacher" (p.74). Shreeve et al (1987, p.313), using Drake's figures, estimate that during a school year, five to six percent of these students' instructional time is likely to be spent with a relief teacher.

Some evidence to support these claims is provided by the Chicago Panel on Public School Finances (Meara, 1983, p.16). In Chicago Public schools it was calculated that, in 1982, teachers were absent

5.4% of the time in elementary schools and 5.6% in high schools. It was estimated from sample figures, if this trend continued in 1983, 58 321 elementary students would experience 9.8 days without a regular scheduled teacher during the school year for a total of 571 546 student days. In the sample high schools, 24 278 high school students, with an average of six classes a day in which each teacher was absent on an average of 10.1 times, would miss 1 471 247 classes with their regularly scheduled teachers. When applying these figures to the system as a whole, it was calculated 309 423 elementary students would miss, on average in 1983, 3 002 945 days with their regular teachers. Similarly, 113 281 high school students would miss 6 864 829 classes with their regularly scheduled teachers.

Although these figures would seem to denote a substantial incidence of teacher absenteeism within this particular school district, it is not possible to determine whether they are exceptionally high because no other figures are available for comparison. But if they are indicative of other districts throughout the United States of America, then it constitutes a considerable additional cost to education in that country. As these figures are based on averages, it follows that the many students who will be in schools where teacher absenteeism is higher, are likely to be especially disadvantaged.

The effects of high rates of teacher absenteeism and the quality of relief teachers on student learning, have caused concern among educators (Drake, 1981, p.74, McIntire et al, 1982, p.702, Shreeve et al, 1987, p.313, Benedict, 1987, p.27, and Johnson, 1988, p.89). Benedict maintains that:

> ***Unless administrators, parents and teachers agree that eleven and a half years of education are sufficient to meet graduation requirements, substitute teachers must move academic learning forward. If relief teachers are to save this half year they must be more than babysitters providing students with busywork. Real efforts must be made by administrators, regular staff and relief teachers to ensure that student performance does not decrease during the regular teacher's absence.***
>
> ***(1987, p.27)***

There appears to be little formal attention given to the effects of teacher absences and the impact of relief teaching on student learning (Tracy, 1988, p.85) but McIntire et al (1982, p.702) and Willerman et al (1986, p.233) agree that teacher absenteeism in the United States of America is expensive, not only in monetary terms, but in student performance.

Willerman et al (1986) suggest that "It seems reasonable ... that if the teacher is absent and the substitute teacher is ineffective, then time-on-task is likely to decrease and result in a decrease in achievement" (p.233). Their hypothesis is based on the report of Wiley and Harnischfeger (1974) where students, in schools with 24 percent more hours of instruction above the average for a school year, show a one third average gain in mathematics and verbal skills and a two-thirds increase in reading comprehension.

In the study by the Chicago Panel, Meara (1983) agrees that the amount of time students spend on academic learning was one of the factors identified as being critical to school success. "Regular instruction by the regular classroom teacher is more likely to produce continuous time-on-task and is therefore more cost effective" (p.6).

While some statistics relating to teacher absenteeism have been produced, scientific research into the effect of this seems to be lacking. But, if regular instruction by the classroom teacher is interrupted by the lengthy or frequent absence of that teacher and there is the substitution of a relief teacher who is unable to continue the instructional program, then it is reasonable to suppose students' educational progress could be slowed.

SOME REASONS FOR RELIEF TEACHER INEFFECTIVENESS

Drake (1981, p.74) considers that many relief teachers are capable and experienced but at the end of a day's relief teaching they may leave the classroom with feelings of frustration and failure, and the saddest reality of all is that substitutes of every type, including the most qualified and dedicated available, are seldom successful in their stand-in roles.

A former Californian high school teacher with six years full time classroom experience (Nelson 1984) discovered that walking into a classroom as a relief teacher left him with a feeling of helplessness. The first few months were most difficult as many students seemed intent on keeping him from doing his job. He considers that the "sight of a substitute teacher often means a play day in the minds of many students and the majority of students have a very negative attitude about substitutes" (p.98).

The literature and experience of educational communities would indicate this kind of experience is not uncommon and that the theory of a qualified professional teacher maintaining discipline and students' educational progress often bears little relationship to the practice of relief teaching. According to Drake (1981, p.74) relief teachers in the United States of America are unlikely to be effective because they are seldom given time to prepare and they may face hostility from administrators, regular teachers and students.

The reasons for relief teacher ineffectiveness are numerous. First, the traditional system of hiring relief teachers at short notice is likely to be inefficient. Ford (1982), a school principal in the United States of America, questions their ability to take charge of the class and adequately accomplish tasks relating to classroom management. He continues:

> ***Substitutes are generally required to take attendance, to announce assignments designated by the absent teacher, and to maintain order. Unfortunately, their ability to carry out even these limited objectives is severely hindered by their transience and their ignorance of school procedures.***
>
> ***(p.72)***

Second, problems can occur in relation to student behaviour and performance because of students' perception of the relief teacher's lack of authority and influence on grades. Third, the lack of lesson plans left by the regular teacher and, fourth, the inability of the relief teacher to teach unfamiliar children for short periods are likely to hinder the relief teacher (Willerman et al 1986, p.233).

The fifth issue relates to the transitory nature of relief teaching because it is unlikely that relief teachers have time to establish authority or rapport with students. Hemmings (1985) feels that while the regular teacher is "adjusted to the specific needs of each class member, and has a background of continuity from which to draw and extend" (p.11) the relief teacher is likely to be disadvantaged in this respect.

Relief teachers should not take all the blame for their ineffectiveness. Tracy (1988) believes school administrators play their part, as relief teachers are often given little advance notice of subject and/or class levels they are expected to teach. She continues:

> ***Add to this placement in a class outside their own expertise, little knowledge of the abilities and experiences of students, minimal***

> ***instruction about the regular teacher's expectations and procedures, and an impotent status in the eyes of students, and the stage is set for failure.***
>
> ***(p. 85)***

It is not possible to assess with certainty the number of teachers who may have experienced any or all of these problems, as no evidence is presented which is shown to be derived from any studies, either scientific or informal. However, the testimonies of Nelson (1984) and Hemmings (1985) are likely to be based on their experiences as relief teachers, and this student's personal experience and informal discussions with other relief teachers suggests that these problems do occur.

ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS TOWARDS RELIEF TEACHERS

School administrators and the public feel that teachers must be seen to be maintaining class control (Lortie, 1975, p.151). To achieve this control, schools develop rules and policies on student behaviour and within this structure, teachers are likely to formulate rules relating to students' behaviour in the classroom. Even if the relief teacher has the time and/or opportunity to become acquainted with these rules, student attitudes towards discipline can create problems.

> ***The frustrating experiences of many substitutes reveal how children really feel about school restrictions and the adults who impose them. A sub is often the perfect scapegoat for these feelings because of her temporary status. She is on very shaky ground if she sees herself in the authoritative position of the regular teacher.***
>
> ***(Pavlich et al, 1974, p.1)***

It is not only students' dissatisfaction with school rules which is likely to create problems. Benedict (1987) feels that it is chiefly student hostility, indifference and misbehaviour that negates the effectiveness of the relief teacher rather than administrative indifference and poor lesson plans. She continues:

> ***The problem is the unseen wall students place between substitutes and themselves. Even with specific lesson plans, there are always gaps in the substitute's perception of assignments and understanding of students' needs and skills. In other words, students resent the substitute teacher's intrusion into the personal relationship between them and their regular teacher.***
>
> ***(p.27)***

In the opinion of Rawson, (1981) the absence of the regular teacher is likely to cause apprehension in students and the way in which the relief

teacher reacts to this has some bearing on how students are likely to behave. He gives two examples which are at opposite ends of the scale but does not identify a middle way in which teachers might react to students. Rawson continues:

> ***If the substitute teacher meets this anxiety and tension with strict discipline, resentment builds and confrontations may occur. If the substitute teacher tries a low-key approach, the students may think the teacher is trying to become a "buddy" to the class. This technique often causes the substitute teacher to be viewed as weak, thereby prompting the students to misbehave to a greater extent.***
>
> ***(p.82)***

While this might be true for teachers generally, it is likely that the substitution of a relief teacher adds to the stress which might normally be felt by some students.

Rawson does not clarify the basis on which he makes his statements about student behaviour, but there is some evidence, gathered from an informal survey in Washington (Shreeve et al 1987, p.314), which supports his view that student behaviour undergoes some change when a relief teacher is superintending a class. Unfortunately there is no information within the article indicating the size of the population which was surveyed making it difficult to judge the reliability of the results.

The Council For Educational Issues from the Department of Education at East Washington University found, from the responses to a questionnaire administered to relief and regular teachers attending classes at the university, that students behave differently when taught by a relief teacher. "Concerning student reactions to substitute teachers, both teacher groups [regular and relief teachers] agreed that students treated substitute teachers with less respect than their full-time counterparts" (ibid., p.315).

Further evidence given by two principals to the Tasmanian Industrial Commission suggests that, here too, some students are likely to take advantage of the fact that relief teachers have little or no knowledge of students. "Unfortunately there are students who would be willing to take advantage of a person who didn't know their name, who didn't know their situation...academic or educational background, as we generally work on individual programs for our children" (1988, p.1006). This kind of situation may allow students the opportunity to do

work that is not up to their usual standard, to cause disruptions and to break school and class rules as the relief teacher is likely to be unaware of the usual classroom procedures.

It is not only students in Tasmania who have been found to take advantage of the relief teachers' lack of knowledge. Benedict (1987), a substitute teacher working in Utah in the United States of America, used a questionnaire to survey the opinions of senior high school students in relation to relief teachers and from the responses she concluded that most children felt it was a tradition to hassle relief teachers. One of the students stated, "Students hassle substitutes because they need a break and that seems to be the best time to have it" (p.27).

Lack of knowledge of students' abilities and the expectations of the regular teacher for students' behaviour may not account entirely for relief teacher ineffectiveness. However the following evidence, though anecdotal, complements the experiences of student behaviour of educators and researchers cited previously. In Australia, Hartshorne (1981), a permanently appointed relief teacher, expressed the view that relief teachers rarely stay long enough in a school to be fully accepted by students. He observes that experience, keenness and personal charm do not count until students are willing to cooperate. "Administrators are usually willing to provide support but ultimately a [relief] teacher stands alone before his charges knowing that they have the power to destroy his control and peace of mind" (p.16).

ATTITUDES OF SCHOOL STAFF AND ADMINISTRATORS

Shreeve et al (1987) consider that because of the amount of time students are likely to spend with relief teachers it "is easy to see ..., that substitute teachers are an important part of the educational team and should be valued as such. But are they?"(p.3). It would seem, in the minds of some, that relief teachers are like a 'spare tyre', to be used in cases of emergency to hold things together, then quickly turned away when the regular teacher returns. Frosch (1984) asks:

> ***How often is the substitute teacher viewed by students, faculty and administrators as just a warm body in the classroom? Is this the main purpose of the substitute? If not then what is the proper role of the substitute teacher?***
>
> ***p.89***

Frosch quotes some administrators as saying that their main concern is that the relief teacher controls the students and does not take part in the educational process when the teacher is absent for short periods. Other principals are likely to see relief teachers as supervisors who keep the class under control (ibid., p.90). Drake (1981) feels that "candidates who can successfully keep class members from making excessive noise, or from injuring themselves or one another will usually be regarded as good substitute teachers" (p.75).

Problems may also be created when the expectations of administrators and classroom teachers do not coincide. It is Rawson's opinion that on the one hand administrators are likely to expect relief teachers to follow school and classroom procedures, with little or no administrative assistance and with a minimum of problems sent to the office (1981, pp. 81-82). On the other hand classroom teachers expect relief teachers to keep the classroom intact, follow sketchy, inadequate lesson plans and to maintain discipline without giving large amounts of busywork. He suggests that although administrators are likely to consider relief teachers as professional colleagues, they often expect them to play the role of babysitter.

It would seem, from the evidence presented above that relief teachers are not always seen as professional educators and colleagues of regular teachers and, because a specific definition of their role appears to be lacking, it might be assumed that a relief teacher's perception of his/her role will be based on the expectations of principal and staff with whom he/she is in contact. Rawson (1981) believes that:

> ***Substitutes have been trained as professional educators but they are frequently treated as second class teachers and sometimes even viewed as mercenaries to be isolated and ignored throughout the day. When confronted with these negative attitudes, relief teachers may experience anxiety relating to their status as educators and consequently self-esteem is likely to suffer.***
>
> ***(p.82)***

In Canada, a study using observations, interviewing, and essays written by students, reviewed some of the problems relating to relief teaching. Observations were made from the elementary school through to high schools in Winnipeg. Those interviewed included thirty relief teachers, four superintendents, five assistant superintendents, ten principals, four vice-principals, twenty regular classroom teachers and twenty three students. Observations of students reacting with relief teachers were

also used. From this study, the researchers came to the following conclusions:

> ***Substitute teachers often experience anxiety and do not feel satisfied, competent, or recognized as belonging to the educational community; they perceive themselves as holding low status and prestige; they feel little job satisfaction... their efforts are not appreciated; they regret that they are never around to observe the progress students have made under their instruction; and they rarely receive positive feedback. In fact there is hardly anything positive to read about substitute teaching.***
>
> ***(Clifton et al, 1985, p. 67)***

Although details relating to the types of questions asked and the methods used to analyse responses is not available within the article, these conclusions should be considered seriously because of the number and variety of subjects in the sample and the methods by which the information was obtained. It serves to describe the kinds of negative attitudes which may engender feelings of anxiety and low self-esteem in relief teachers.

APPREHENSIONS, ATTITUDES AND ANXIETIES OF RELIEF TEACHERS

Relief teaching is a demanding job. Shreeve et al (1987) state: "The demands of substitute teaching call for great flexibility and a strong sense of self, but the conditions of substitute teaching reinforce neither of these qualities" (p.316). It is likely that some relief teachers will find it difficult to sustain a positive attitude towards this kind of work because the position of the relief teacher is an uncertain one. Each day may bring new students and administrators, new school policies and rules to remember.

Drake (1981) feels that relief teachers face an almost impossible task. He continues:

> ***They are confronted with apathy and often hostility on the part of students, administrators, and faculty members. Usually they have little understanding of what has been studied by the classes they are covering. They are judged on their ability to maintain order, and there is no reward for good instruction.***
>
> ***(p.76)***

Further evidence relating to negative attitudes confronting relief teachers was elicited by the survey undertaken by Shreeve et al (1987). These teachers felt that administrators were indifferent to them, that they were treated as 'fill-ins' or ignored altogether. The survey also

found that relief teacher attitudes towards themselves were negative. "Half those interviewed expressed a poor self-image. Three quarters of the substitutes felt others thought poorly of them as well" (p.314).

These feelings may be compounded by the indifferent attitudes of some school staff towards relief teachers. "The isolation of the substitute teacher by the often distant and cool staff effectively blocks off any form of internal feedback regarding the substitute's performance" (Rawson, 1981, p.83).

The title of 'substitute' teacher, used in the United States of America, is identified as a problem area by Shreeve et al (1987, p.315) and Johnson et al, (1988, p.89) as it seems to denote that the person is not as good as a regular teacher even though he/she may be a qualified professional. The Tasmanian term 'relief teacher' does not seem to have the same connotations, rather it implies a teacher whose role is one of support.

While a different title may have some beneficial effect on the self esteem of these teachers, the problem may be caused by the negative attitudes of administrators, staff and students. Perhaps a change in the attitudes of some of these people, rather than name, would be reflected by a more positive and confident perspective in substitute teachers.

The way in which the relief teacher sees himself/herself is likely have a bearing on his/her effectiveness in the classroom. Frosch (1984) states "even the best plans and help will not make an excellent substitute out of a person who sees substituting as a baby-sitting job" (p.90).

Research conducted by Johnson, Holcombe and Vance (1988) on this subject provides some insight into some of these factors which are likely to cause varying degrees of anxiety and/or apprehension among relief teachers. The survey, administered in 1986, was conducted with the entire population of 378 relief teachers used by a large school district in a midwestern city in the United States of America. The response rate was 54.2 percent or 205 questionnaires returned.

The survey instrument used a Likert type scale and asked respondents to indicate the degree of anxiety they felt about forty three anxiety factors relating to relief teaching experience. The factors were divided into professional adequacy, student behaviour, learner achievement, and relationships with supervisors and colleagues. The scale values ranged

from no apprehension, little apprehension, some apprehension, fairly apprehensive to very apprehensive. The respondents were also asked to specify the number of years they had been a relief teacher, their reasons for working as relief teachers and whether they relieved in their endorsed areas.

Data analysis of the responses indicated the following as factors which were most likely to cause anxiety amongst relief teachers.

> ***More than one half of the teachers surveyed were anxious about two factors: finding no plan or a sketchy one ... and teaching in another area. More than one third had at least some anxiety about finding little or no information related to seating, class rules, and the teacher's schedule ... handling discipline problems... and preventing discipline problems... More than fifteen percent of the substitute teachers had at least some anxiety for all of the eight items in the category relationships with supervisors and colleagues .***
>
> ***(ibid., p.90).***

A low response rate and a population where 77 percent of teachers had been substituting for only one to two years indicates that the results of this study are unlikely to be representative of the population of relief teachers in this school district, or indeed the United States of America as a whole. However, the implications are that some teachers do suffer some apprehensions in relation to relief teaching and the question arises as to whether this is due, in part, to a lack of teaching experience.

TRAINING TEACHERS FOR RELIEF TEACHING

In the light of increasing teacher absenteeism, if schools are to provide ongoing quality education, they must retain a group of high quality relief teachers. To achieve this, educators have stressed the need for some kind of training for relief work which would assist teachers develop strategies which could increase their effectiveness in the classroom (McIntire et al, 1982, p.702 and Augustin, 1987, p.393).

Training for and experience in full-time classroom teaching does not always prepare a teacher for the difficulties he/she is likely to encounter as a relief teacher. Augustin (1987) maintains that although many relief teachers are well qualified, relief teaching requires a different approach because it is the responsibility of the relief teacher to promote the smooth running of the classroom and provide students with meaningful learning activities and assignments, often at short notice and with little

or no information about students' current program of work, abilities and problems. She is of the opinion that special programs relating to the needs of relief teaching could provide orientation and training as well as introducing approaches to presenting meaningful learning experiences to students, thereby increasing relief teacher effectiveness and strengthening the overall learning program. Augustin continues:

> ***The training programs should include topics such as methods of presentation, responsibilities of substitute teachers, approaches to discipline problems, and procedures for using plans left by a regular teacher.***
>
> ***(ibid., p.393)***

It is questionable whether courses for relief teaching are appropriate as, except for issues relating to the responsibilities of relief teaching, pre-service training would generally include most of these topics suggested by Augustin. Some of the qualities cited by researchers (Drake, 1981 and Shreeve et al, 1987) as being necessary for relief teaching, such as strong self-esteem, flexibility, ingenuity and resilience, are often attributes a person may bring to an enterprise or develop while so engaged. It is unlikely that these qualities can be taught.

In stating her case for the need for these training programs, Augustin gives reasons as to why different approaches are necessary but does not specify exactly what they are. If these different approaches are necessary, it is likely that there is a need to identify them as they are crucial to the establishment and implementatation of any training course relating to relief teaching.

One of the problems for relief teachers, especially the inexperienced, is that they may never be quite sure of what to expect. Hemmings (1985) describes relief teaching as being akin to a blind date because you "open the door, hope for the best, and from then on your approach may or may not succeed" (p.11). He blames teacher-education institutions because they do not prepare their students to avoid failure. He suggests that the final three months of teacher training should be orientated towards casual relief development but this strategy makes no allowance for other priorities related to the last months of training.

Because of their concern that the number of competent, effective relief teachers will decline as the need for them increases, McIntire and

Hughes (1982) from the University of Houston, in cooperation with the Texas Southern University and the Houston Independent School District, developed a twenty-hour in-service training program that addresses the specific needs of the relief teacher. McIntire et al continue:

> ***We invited 10 substitute teachers to help us develop a list of essential skills for substitute teaching. We then sent this list to other substitute teachers, to full-time classroom teachers, and to ... principals so that they could verify the importance of each skill. From this validated list we carefully constructed learning modules, each with a single focus***
>
> ***(p.702).***

Participants in the Houston training program learn the following:-

- disciplinary techniques
- the study of the principles of learning that help promote productive classroom behaviour
- how to motivate students towards success to set tasks at the appropriate level of difficulty
- communication skills
- the mechanics of filling out school forms
- to understand the policies of a school, state and federal laws
- planning an effective lesson at short notice

The Houston Program is taught by university professors and classroom teachers or experienced substitute teachers. Exams are held to test the participants' mastery of the techniques covered in each part of the program.

During the planning of the program McIntire and Hughes discovered that many of the skills related to relief teaching were different from those of regular teaching. Relief teachers must be able to prepare and administer lessons and facilitate the smooth running of the classroom with a group of students who may be strangers.

The relief teacher training program described by McIntire and Hughes is similar to that which might be found in a regular teaching training course, that is, there is no description of how the program meets the precise needs of relief teachers. Neither are the kinds of skills needed by relief teachers specified, for example, what are the skills needed to

prepare lessons for and teach a group of unknown students and can they be learned from courses?

An alternative to the training of relief teachers has been proposed by Rawson (1981). So that relief teachers maybe more effective, he suggests that regular school staff should attend short in-service training sessions which would make them aware of the problems facing people engaged in relief teaching. During these sessions administrators and staff members could articulate their concerns and desires about relief teachers, clarifying their roles, and delineating "characteristics needed to fit that role" (p.83). This kind of activity has the potential to develop a better working relationship between regular and relief teachers.

PROVISION OF INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Several authors have advocated that school administrators and staff provide information for relief teachers. Suggestions included the provision of lesson plans, maps showing the layout of the school, and information relating to timetables, school rules and policies (Nelson, 1983, pp.99-100, Gunderson et al 1985, pp.160-163, and Augustin, 1987, p.394). Although these suggestions may seem obvious, informal talks with other relief teachers and personal experience reveals that this information is often unavailable. While these will not solve all the problems confronting people undertaking relief teaching, they are likely to be vital in organising activities and lesson plans for the day.

Advice for relief teachers has been included in several articles. For example, Everly et al (1979, p.94) recommend that relief teachers should maintain discipline, be ready for anything, adopt a positive attitude and meet with other relief teachers to discuss ideas about relief teaching. Drake (1981, p.76) advocates the arousal of pupil interest and enthusiasm, stimulation of creative and original thought, recognition of and catering for individual abilities within a class, adherence to school rules and policies, and a friendly and positive public relations posture. Wilson (1985, pp.73-74) suggests that it is advisable to contact administrators and regular staff if assistance is required during the day, check into the office to ascertain any events likely to to be taking place during the day and use reliable students to gain information.

The usefulness of such advice for relief teachers is debatable. The points listed above could pertain to any teaching situation and, as many relief teachers are qualified and/or experienced professional people,

they are likely to be aware that many of these things are basic principles of teaching. There is little evidence within the literature to suggest that researchers have formulated strategies to assist teachers cope specifically with relief teaching.

PROPOSITIONS TO BE TESTED

Educators from the United States of America are concerned that the number of days each student must spend with a relief teacher may affect his/her academic progress. Much has been written in a general way on the effect of relief teachers on students, how schools and relief teachers can work together more effectively and the kinds of problems which face relief teachers. Many of the articles appear to relate to the personal experiences of their authors and it seems that there is very little scientific evidence relating to the problems faced by relief teachers, the effect of relief teachers on students' academic learning, the attitudes of administrators, regular staff and students towards relief teachers, and the apprehensions of relief teachers. Because the propositions arising from the literature generally refer to relief teaching in the United States of America, I intend to discover whether they are also relevant to Tasmania by surveying the opinions of administrators, regular teachers and relief teachers in this state.

The following is a summary of the propositions contained in the preceding review of the literature and is to be a guide as to key areas for further investigation.

- The role of the relief teacher is likely to cause some confusion as it is seen by some administrators and regular staff as that of babysitting, maintaining order and providing children with busywork while others expect the relief teacher to take over all the teaching and supervisory duties of the regular teacher (Drake, 1981, p.75, Rawson, 1881, pp.81-82 and Frosch, 1984, p.89).
- Student learning is likely to suffer because of the relief teacher's ignorance of the current curriculum, school policies and procedures, and students' abilities and problems (Nelson, 1983, pp.99-100, Gunderson, 1985, pp.160-163, Willerman 1986, p.233, Augustin, 1987, p.394, and Tracy, 1988, p.85).
- The negative attitudes, lack of co-operation and the relief teacher's perceived lack of authority by some students is likely to affect the ability of the relief teacher to maintain

student learning and the smooth running of the classroom (Pavlich et al, 1974, p.1, Drake, 1981, p.75, Nelson, 1984, p.98, Benedict, 1987, p.27, and Tracy, 1988, p.85).

- Relief teachers are not always given sufficient assistance and feedback and may feel isolated, neglected and unwelcome in a school through lack of contact with regular staff and administrators (Rawson 1981, p.82 and Clifton et al, 1985, p.67).
- The lack of lesson plans or sketchy ones and teaching in another area, outside his/her own expertise, (this includes levels and subjects) is likely to is likely to cause anxiety for, and decrease the effectiveness of, the relief teacher because he/she does not know what the students are expected to achieve (Johnson et al, 1988, p.90 and Tracy, 1988, p.85).
- Job satisfaction is likely to be affected by the transient nature of relief work as there is often little time to complete or follow up activities and to build positive relationships with students (Hartshorne, 1981, p.16 and Clifton et al, 1985, p.67).
- Training is necessary to develop the skills required for relief teaching because these teachers need to be effective in moving academic learning forward, and able to plan and implement educationally valid activities at short notice with little or no knowledge of students' abilities and the current curriculum (Benedict, 1987, p.27, Augustin, 1987, p.393 and McIntire et al, 1982, p.702).

CONCLUSION

A recurring theme relating to relief teaching is the concern that the increasing utilisation of teacher leave provisions is resulting in the fragmentation of students' educational programs. This has brought under scrutiny the present system by which relief teachers are employed and many researchers are of the opinion that the effectiveness of relief teachers is likely to have an impact on students' academic progress.

It is logical to assume that the use of a well-qualified and experienced relief teacher, while leaving teachers to continue their own learning programs and principals and senior teachers free to perform administr-

ative duties, can ensure that disruption to students' education is minimised. However, within the literature, it is implied that the organisation and use of relief teachers is inefficient and consequently relief teachers are unlikely to to be successful in their roles as substitutes for the regular teacher and therefore student learning is likely to suffer.

Many educators have advanced theories as to why these teachers are ineffective but they are handicapped by the dearth of scientific investigation in their recognition of the ramifications of the issues presented within the literature relating to relief teaching. Therefore, some kind of sytematic research is required before educationalists can determine the real problems and find solutions.

On the evidence presented in this chapter, it would seem that some of the blame for the ineffectivess of relief teachers should be attributed to schools where the negative attitudes of staff and students are likely to make such assignments untenable. It is also unreasonable to expect a relief teacher, however well-qualified and experienced, to continue student learning programs when he/she is unfamiliar with students and their current curriculum.

Hence it is important that regular staff and administrators recognise the difficulties inherent in relief teaching so that they can formulate school policies which relate to the role of relief teachers, the collation of information concerning classroom procedures, the content of learning programs and expected outcomes, availability of relevant materials, and discipline procedures, all of which are likely to assist in organising a relief day.

CHAPTER 2

SOME HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF RELIEF TEACHING

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of the development of relief teaching in Tasmania from 1929 to 1992. The changes which have taken place in the ways in which schools cover the classes of absent teachers, the introduction of relief teachers into Tasmanian schools, the impact of Tasmanian Government funding for relief teachers and the dramatic increase in their employment over the past twenty years will be described.

Since written records of relief teaching in Tasmania before 1963 appear to be extremely limited, it seemed likely that retired teachers might provide an alternative source of information which could lead to enhanced understanding of the link between educational changes and the increased employment of relief teachers. Nine former teachers agreed to be interviewed to provide a perspective on the ways in which schools covered the absence of regular teachers. The information gathered in this way extends beyond 1960 and spans the period from 1929 until 1987, thus providing a supplement to the records of the post 1960 years. The interview responses give an insight into the ways in which schools covered the classes of absent teachers before the introduction of relief teachers, and some of the advantages and disadvantages associated with internal supervision. Information relating to the introduction of relief teachers into primary and high schools throughout Tasmania was also gleaned from these interviews (see Appendix 1 for transcripts).

Further information on the period 1963 to 1989 was obtained from Tasmanian Education Department files which included correspondence and memoranda, and newspaper articles from 1963 to 1989. From the3 data an impression could be gained of the effects of increased funding for education made available by the Federal Labour Government in the early 1970's and the subsequent increase in employment opportunities for relief teachers, the concerns of educators and the community about the lack of state funds for the employment of relief teachers to cover the classes of absent teachers and the ensuing impact on school staff and students.

In addition to providing background information relating to relief teaching in Tasmania, this chapter identifies concerns about the effect of the lack of relief teachers on students' academic progress. While educators in the United States of America (see Chapter 1) feel that the time students spend with these teachers may be detrimental to their academic progress, records within Tasmanian Education Department files, together with interviews with former teachers, present a different perspective in that the unavailability of relief teachers is seen to have had an adverse effect on student learning programs.

ABSENT TEACHER SUBSTITUTION

Pre World War 2

The relatively deprived circumstances of schools prior to World War 2 may be attributable to economic problems. In 1931, Tasmania was suffering such severe economic difficulties that the Education Department was forced to retrench twenty teachers and reduce salaries by twenty percent. Class sizes were reported as being on the increase (Phillips, 1985, pp.227, 231-232). In 1929 and 1930, class sizes varied between forty and seventy, with forty being considered a small class, while seventy was a very big class (Appendix 1, Interview 3). The economic climate, in the 1920's and 30's, would seem to preclude the employment of extra teachers to cover the classes of those who were absent. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that one of the teachers interviewed (Interview 3) reports that there were "no such things" as relief teachers during these years.

This shortage of teachers, large classes and lack of space in classrooms influenced the way in which schools covered the classes of absent teachers. As classes were generally large, it was not possible to combine two of them and accommodate both in one room. In the event of teacher absence, the teacher in the room next door would supervise her own and the class of the absent teacher. The supervising teacher would set work for this class and "keep an eye on them." This system was feasible because discipline in schools was very strict and children were regimented and not allowed the freedom of movement generally permitted in schools today (Interview 3).

Additional information provided by Phillips (1985, p.177) suggests that, generally, classes were teacher dominated, the subjects within the

curriculum were tightly organised within the weekly timetable and basic skills were learned by rote with regular revision and constant repetition. Large classes and a set curriculum, rather than programs based on the needs of the individual, were likely to be the order of the day. Children were not encouraged to be individuals, rather they were taught to think of themselves as being part of a class or social unit (ibid., pp.269-270). This meant that the supervising teacher need make few distinctions between ability levels and could set an activity for the class as a whole.

Internal Supervision - 1945 to 1970

The advent of the Second World War created a shortage of teachers and during this time two retired teachers observed that anyone could get a job (Interviews 3 and 7).

> ***More than 160 teachers, many of whom were among the younger and better qualified, joined the services... Their replacements were made up of retired teachers, temporary teachers and monitors who were untrained adolescent girls.***
>
> ***(Phillips, 1985, p.237)***

For a decade and a half, the baby-boom of the 1950's and increased immigration caused a dramatic rise in enrolments and, coupled with a shortage of teachers and accommodation, placed great strains on the physical resources of the Tasmanian Education Department (ibid., p.273). In these years, class sizes varied between forty and fifty children. One high school, during the 1970's, catered for over a thousand pupils and the arrival of any extra pupils created severe problems in housing, seating and the provision of lockers. One teacher is reported to have rotated groups of children between the corridor and the classroom because he was unable to fit the entire class into the room at one time (Interview 7).

The teachers interviewed state that, in their experience, absences in schools were covered internally until the 1970's, that is, teachers from within the school taught or supervised classes of absent teachers. The ability to provide internal supervision was likely to be determined by such factors as the number of teachers within the school, the availability of accommodation, the location of the school and whether it was a primary or high school (Interview 7).

In small country schools, children were likely to be sent home because

there was no other teacher to take the supervision (Interviews 5, 6 and 8). One of the retired teachers reported that he and his fellow pupils would occasionally receive a message that they were not to come to school because the teacher was ill (Interview 1).

In 1946, when a teacher was absent from one of Tasmania's area schools, children who lived in the town were sent home while those who lived in outlying areas were farmed out to any class where there was space. "A grade 3, for instance, may have been sent to a grade 7 class. The children took paper and pencils or crayons and spent the day in that class amusing themselves" (Interview 8).

Generally high schools coped with short term absences but problems occurred when teachers were absent for extended periods. The ability to provide adequate supervision and maintain the quality of education placed stress on the resources of schools. High school teachers report that internal supervision meant the loss of free periods and in a crisis situation, when a number of teachers were absent or a teacher was absent for a long period, the preparation and marking of work usually done in free periods began to suffer. Long periods of teacher absence often meant that the children's education was put at risk (Interviews 1 and 2).

On a short term basis, there were advantages in covering the classes of absent teachers with teachers from within the school. Bringing in a relief teacher often meant extra work for an already busy staff because there was no time for the niceties of welcoming and showing them around (Interview 7). By covering absences internally, school administrators could ensure that they had a teacher who was familiar with school routine and policies and, depending upon the staff, better discipline (Interviews 2 and 4).

Primary schools had greater problems in covering teacher absences internally because there were often no teachers free for supervision as all members of staff taught every period in the week. Supervision taken by a teacher in the next room was not always satisfactory because children did not always work when the supervisor was teaching in his/her own room. Classes that were split up and sent to other teachers may have spent the day amusing themselves rather than learning (Interviews 8 and 9). Primary school children especially must have suffered during this period because the doubling of classes may have

meant a teacher was endeavouring to cater for his or her class plus another. With such large classes this might mean a single teacher coping with eighty or more students and the task would be one of supervision rather than teaching and learning.

The quality of internal supervision was likely to be affected by the calibre of the replacement teacher and could have far reaching effects on some students' education. A principal in the 1950's experienced extreme difficulties when a teacher on his staff was absent from school because her parents were ill.

> ***I could only replace her with an untrained monitor. This was also a grade 6 class when grade 6 was a very important year...It was in the days when children sat exams for scholarships and to qualify for a place in high schools. It had a devastating effect because hardly any of the children passed. It was very serious but I couldn't do anything about it.***
>
> ***(Interview 9)***

Although high schools endeavoured to cover the absence with a teacher from the same subject department, this was not always possible and the classes of absent teachers could suffer from a lack of continuity. Some teachers (especially those taking classes in a different subject area) were able to supervise only and keep control of the class and, because some teachers were more competent than others, the amount of work done by students varied (Interviews 1, 2 and 7).

While the quality of supervising teachers may have, at times, been questionable, schools could at least ensure children's education might continue with the minimum of interruption by having pre-planned work available. Teachers were expected to have a program of work for a fortnight in advance and this was likely to be of assistance to supervising teachers, especially if they were teaching out of their subject area. In some schools, teachers who were absent without prior notice were required to ring the school and provide information about the work the children were to go on with (Interviews 1, 2, 5 and 8).

Some teachers would not presume to teach a lesson which was not part of their subject area. In this instance the teacher would supervise the work set by the absent teacher (Interview1). Other teachers did manage to teach in another subject area (Interviews 2 and 7).

> ***Teaching was more definite and simple in the 40's, 50's and 60's. Teachers used text books and taught using the blackboard and chalk.... Teachers commonly had to teach out of their subject area but they were***

more broadly educated than they are today. In those days you couldn't matriculate unless you had maths, science, history, geography and English.

(Interview 2)

Added to this, high school teachers describe many of the children they taught as enjoying school and being motivated to learn, especially those in academic classes. If the work for the class was not programmed or there was not time to organise work from the program, they could tell the supervising teacher what work they were presently doing and what they were to go on with (Interviews 2, 4 and 7).

The evidence acquired through the interviews with retired teachers suggests that internal supervision, in the short term, had definite advantages in that the teachers were familiar with the students and school routine but, during the sixties and seventies, changes were taking place, especially in primary education. The emphasis in teaching moved from what was being taught to the best way to teach it. Education became child centred rather than teacher directed, with the individual's needs, interests and capabilities being the bases for planning. Time was organised in flexible blocks allowing the teacher to become involved with individuals in learning situations, sharing experiences and the quest for information (Phillips, 1985, p. 277).

Under these circumstances closer teacher-child relationships were likely to develop, therefore, teacher absences had the potential to disrupt this relationship along with the planning and implementing of activities suited to a range of ability levels within a classroom. This meant that previous strategies of supervision by a teacher in the next room or the doubling of classes was not suitable because many programs within classrooms required the teacher to work with individuals or small groups and this was likely to mean that two classes suffered interruptions. Relief teachers began to appear in schools during the sixties and while a substitute was unlikely to replicate the regular teacher, interruptions to learning programs could be diminished.

THE RELIEF TEACHER PROGRAM FROM 1970

The Organisation Of Relief Teachers

To alleviate problems caused by teacher absences the Tasmanian Teachers' Federation envisaged a system of trained teachers temporarily taking charge of classes, thus relieving regular teachers from the supervision of these classes so that they might carry out their own

teaching programs *(The General Secretary, Tasmanian State School Teachers'Federation, 11th December, 1964 and 25th March, 1965, File32/3/18). The Federation was informed by the Director of Education that it was already Departmental policy to employ relief teachers if a class teacher was to be absent for a long period of time, but he was "not prepared to appoint full time, a number of relieving teachers who would be available to fill casual vacancies" (21st December, 1964, File 32/3/18).

While the employment of casual relief teachers allowed other teachers within a school to continue their teaching programs, there were some problems. The teachers interviewed suggested the following were some of difficulties with these teachers (Interviews 4, 5 and 8) .

- The relief teacher would know what work had to be done but would not always do it as the children were accustomed to having it done.
- Standards varied between the teacher and the relief teacher. Sometimes the relief teacher was not particular as to how the work was done. Others were too particular.
- Children resented not having their regular teacher and sometimes behaved badly.
- The regular teacher did not always have the register and program up to date.
- Timetables were not always explicit. The relief teacher would not always know when subjects such as music, physical education and library were to be taken. Often the children's routine would be disturbed.
- Discipline and control could be a problem.
- Reports were received at the Teachers' Federation that schools saw relief teachers as 'fair game' and gave them extra duties.
- Some relief teachers 'baby-sat' rather than taught.
- Preparation of lessons was set out but the directions were not alway comprehensive.

In spite of these disadvantages, or perhaps because of them, attempts were made to organise a pool of relief teachers whose members might

** Due to the diversity of authorship of correspondence and memoranda contained in files held in the Department of Education and the Arts, all references in the bibliography are, for convenience, included under "File" and identified with an appropriate file number.*

be called upon to fill casual positions. These efforts appear to have been frustrated because of a shortage of suitably qualified people (Minister for Education, October 1965, File 32/3/18). Therefore, it is not surprising that many of the teachers interviewed noted that they were still supervising classes within their schools at this time. The position appears to have improved in 1969. The *Examiner* and *Advocate* newspapers reported that the relief teacher pool was working well in primary schools although more teachers were needed in high schools (2nd August, 1969, File 32/3/18).

So that schools would receive an equitable share of the provision for relief teachers and funds would not be depleted before the end of the financial year, principals were required to have authorisation from the Education Department before employing a relief teacher.

Principals in the Southern Region were required to make their requests to the Personnel Branch. Some of these principals found that problems arose when they could not contact the authorising officer before 8.30 a.m. The Southern High School Principals' Association requested that, as the Education Department would not transfer the authorisation to Regional Office, the authorising officer should be at the Personnel Branch by 8.20 a.m. each morning to receive calls concerning relief teachers. The Association stated that most teachers notified their schools between 8.00 and 8.20 a.m. Under the system, Head Office could not be contacted until 9.00 a.m. and consequently, relief teachers did not arrive until much later in the morning (Secretary 13th May, 1976 File 32/3/18). This situation was likely to have given relief teachers little time for preparation and schools would be forced to supervise classes internally until they arrived

The Director-General would not accept the fact that principals were not able to contact Head Office by telephone before 9.00 a.m. He claimed that surveys had shown that few principals had made telephone calls about the need for relief teachers before 8.40 a.m. The Association was informed that he did not intend altering, at that time, any arrangements concerning the authorisation for the employment of relief teachers (16th April, 1976, File 32/3/18). Because the rate of expenditure in this area was alarming, instructions had been given that the matter of relief teachers was to be carefully monitored "so that the needs and use might be defined more systematically than in recent years" (22nd April, 1976, File 32/3/18).

The procedure for principals seeking authorization to employ relief teachers was amended slightly in 1978 and the authority to employ them could now be given from Regional Office by the Regional Director, Superintendent or another officer. The Personnel Branch could be contacted in an emergency.

Although retired teachers observed that problems occurred within the classroom when relief teachers covered the classes of absent teachers, the greatest concerns of and difficulties faced by schools appeared to be the unavailability of suitable relief staff and insufficient funding for the program. There is no suggestion, within the files, that schools did receive an equitable share of relief days. It seems that relief cover was allocated on a 'first come first served' basis and when the funds were depleted, schools were forced to return to internal supervision.

FINANCES

Financial cost of absences

Meara (1983, p.21) has noted that in the United States of America relief cover expenses include the payroll costs for relief teachers as well as the regular pay for teachers and that school districts are likely to pay doubly each time relief cover is used. This comment applies to Tasmania and data contained within Education Department files illustrates the tremendous financial pressures brought about by these payroll costs. Although facts and figures were not documented for each year, the information within the files provides examples of the effects of inadequate funding on the relief teacher program over the past two decades.

At times, Tasmanian schools utilised the relief teacher scheme to such an extent that finance set aside for this purpose was depleted well before the end of the financial year. For example, in February 1971, the Director General of Education appealed to the Minister for Education for extra funding as it was apparent that the provision for that financial year would be exhausted in six weeks and he was concerned that a serious situation would develop where classes would be left unsupervised (22nd February, 1971, File 32/3/18). The Minister replied that the Government was suffering a severe financial crisis and further funding was unlikely to be forthcoming (25th February, 1971, File 32/3/18).

Consequently, principals were informed that it would not be possible to approve any more relief appointments after the 19th March, 1971. Special applications could be made to Head Office if teachers were to be away for extended periods. The Director-General of Education explained that this situation had arisen because there had been no reduction in the expenditure on relief teaching and that the problem had been exacerbated by the rapid expansion in this area over the last two months (17th March, 1971, File 32/3/18).

At the end of March 1971, the situation was alleviated by the provision of $20 000 in emergency funds approved for relief teaching. This brought the total expenditure for the financial year to $110 000. Even though a crisis had been averted, the Minister for Education stated that the relief teacher scheme would be more tightly controlled as he considered that principals had been overdoing the hiring of relief teachers. Although he felt that winter would bring a rise in teacher absences, no children would be turned away from school as, wherever possible, teachers would take extra classes, double up or devise some other method of covering for absent colleagues. Only when this was not possible would there be a case for hiring a relief teacher *(Mercury*, 31st March, 1971, File 32/3/18).

This was likely to have placed pressure not only on the Education Department but on teaching staff who had to cope directly with the problems created when colleagues were absent. It seems schools were left to contend with these situations as best they could and no evidence is available to suggest that the minister advocated any other practical strategies which might assist schools in providing class cover for absent teachers in times of crises without placing enormous stress on their resources.

Because of the State Government's stance in regard to this funding, it would seem that the Director General of Education had few alternatives but to enforce a decrease in the use of relief teachers. He subsequently informed the Regional Directors and the Director of Personnel of the following guidelines: they would not be appointed to replace teachers attending seminars, meetings or supervising educational visits to museums or films; some restraint would be exercised where teachers were absent on personal leave; there were to be no constraints where teachers were absent through illness or exceptional circumstances such as bereavement or family illness (7th April, 1971, File 32/3/18).

The Director-General of Education indicated that there were, and probably would always be, some limitations on the employment of relief staff. The matter was being kept under review but in the meantime, unless attendance at seminars was required by the Department, teachers would only be released from duty if the school could effectively continue the teaching program with existing staff (14th September, 1972, File 32/3/18).

In 1974 the cost of hiring relief teachers was almost triple the 1971 allocation, though this is not in constant dollar terms, as a total of $300 000 had been used during the 1974. This sum represented 15 000 days of relief, covering both absences caused through illness and in-service training. The Director General of Education felt that these figures indicated a "liberal approach" in the provision of relief staff for schools (19th November, 1974, File 32/3/18).

Funds continued to be limited during the seventies. This necessitated the monitoring of the program because the cost of employing these teachers continued to escalate, with approximately $277 000 being spent in State funded relief teaching in the first six months of the financial year 1977-78 (Director-General of Education, 20th April, 1978, File 32/3/18).

In 1981 the situation relating to the employment of relief teachers had not improved. Circumstances had been exacerbated by a fifty percent decrease in State Government funds for relief teachers. As the winter term progressed, severe problems were experienced by schools. The Tasmanian Teachers' Federation advised the Director General that the morale of teachers and the quality of education was beginning to be affected by the lack of relief teachers (16th July, 1981, File 17/4/17).

The Senior Superintendent, Personnel announced that, "severe budgetary restrictions of 1981 have produced a special set of circumstances and it is mandatory that limitations be placed on the employment of relief teachers." Schools would cover absences internally if they could do so without interruption to the children's educational program. This might involve the use of the principal and/or senior staff. If the principal was unable to cover the absence internally, he might employ a relief teacher to cover the first or second day but not both (28th July, 1981, File 17/4/17).

No further reports were found within the files but it is likely that the problems of insufficient funding for the relief teaching program has persisted throughout the eighties and into the nineties. The amounts allocated have generally proven inadequate to meet the demand, for example, in 1990 it was reported that the Education Department's budget had been overspent by $1 700 000 (*Mercury*, 24th September, p.2, 1990). The same source announced that as part of the Field Labour Government's proposal to cut education costs, a reduction of $2 500 000, almost ten times that of the 1974 budget allocation, was to be made to funds for relief teaching. This reduction in funds is likely to be related to the effects of a general economic downturn and associated cutbacks in government expenditure.

Inadequate funding for relief teachers is likely to mean that schools are, at times, confronted with insufficient staff to maintain learning programs within the school. This leaves schools with the options of having teachers supervise their own and the absent teacher's class, using the principal as a relief teacher or sending children home. Extra workloads, created by the absence of colleagues, frequently place more stress on teachers which in turn may affect their ability to effectively maintain learning programs, and when this occurs the real losers are likely to be the students.

Views of educators and professionals concerning the availability of relief teachers

At times, members of the teaching fraternity, parent groups and the Tasmanian Teachers' Federation have felt that students in this state have been disadvantaged because relief teachers were unavailable. The Federation considered that if the Education Department's policy of tight control on the funding of relief teachers continued, it would be inevitable that situations would arise when there would be insufficient teachers to fully maintain teaching programs in schools. If this occurred, children would have to be rostered off from school. This had already been implemented in one high school because of the teacher shortage (*Mercury*. 27th March, 1971, File 32/3/18).

It seems that the Federation's concerns were justified, as evidence from former teachers, indicates that childrens' education did suffer interruptions. In times of such crises, when classes could not be supervised by

a teacher in the next room or by combining classes, children were likely to be sent to the library to read. If there was no librarian, the teacher nearest the library would 'keep an ear' on the children to ensure that the noise level did not get too high. At other times, classes were sent into the yard to read books or into the corridor near a strong teacher (Interview 1).

For schools with a high rate of teacher absenteeism, the situation was likely to have been chaotic as teachers strove to continue their own teaching programs as well as taking on some form of supervision of children whose teachers were absent. Some schools were likely to have been, at times, hard pressed to provide an effective educational program because the remaining staff may have been too few in number to adequately cover the absences. Teachers supervising children in the library or the yard must have found it difficult to concentrate their full attention on their own classes.

The Education Department's expectation that non-teaching principals would take over the classes of absent teachers brought a protest from some of the parents involved in school affairs. They expressed concern that guidelines restricting the employment of relief teachers were likely to cause problems for some non-teaching principals because they were expected to cover teacher absences (other than long-term ones), attend university lectures, principals' meetings and seminars and take sports groups as well as attending to the administrative affairs of the school. Their conclusion was:

> ***We parents... are most perturbed about our principals not being able to do all the things they are appointed to do in a school because they spend so much of their time acting as relief teachers.***
>
> ***(Mercury, 18th April, 1972, File 32/3/18)***

Some of these principals may have found that combining administrative duties with those of relief teaching an arduous task and while many of these were likely to be competent teachers, their effectiveness may have been limited by the lack of time for the preparation, supervision and marking of lessons.

In June 1981 the lack of funds for the employment of relief teachers was causing serious repercussions. The President of the Tasmanian Teachers' Federation stated that the shortage of finance for relief teachers "had affected some schools to the point where it would be

more advantageous to send pupils home rather than distribute them among other classes" (*Mercury*, 3rd July, 1981, File 17/4/17).

The President of the Northern Regional Principals' Association also expressed concern. He considered:

> ***Some sick teachers feel obliged to come to school when they should be at home... Schools that could not cope had two alternatives to send children home under the compulsory age of six and use their teacher as a relief worker, or revert to a class rostering off system when teachers became ill.***
>
> ***(Examiner, 3rd July, 1981, File17/4/17)***

Any such plans to roster classes was not likely to be supported by parents as the Tasmanian Council of Parents' and Friends' Association stressed that parents would not tolerate any decision by teachers to send children home from school because of the relief teacher problem. They felt that although class sizes had been decreased, the burden on teachers had not been eased and in view of this the Association felt that cuts should be made in non-classroom areas such as research and in-service training programs (*Examiner*. 9th July, 1981, File 17/4/17).

The Tasmanian Primary Principals' Association considered that the restrictions on the employment of relief teachers placed severe strains on teachers and caused significant interruptions to the educational programs of many schools. The incidence of teachers coming to work when they were unwell had increased, therefore reducing any likelihood of a speedy return to good health. This in turn often aggravated and prolonged difficulties. Teachers were reluctant to go on sick leave knowing that they were leaving additional work for their colleagues (14th July, 1981, File 17/4/1).

Another group expressing concern was the Kindergarten Teachers' Association of Tasmania which registered a protest with the Tasmanian Teachers' Federation in relation to any decisions to close kindergartens so that kindergarten teachers could be used as relief teachers. They felt that the continued disruption could adversely affect the kindergarten "child's future learning potential" as the early years were vital in the development of skills and attitudes. They wished to state that children in the early childhood area of education were equally entitled to continuity as older children (10th August, 1981, File 17/4/17).

There was no indication within the correspondence of the period, of the

proposed length of time for which kindergartens would be closed. The concern of kindergarten teachers was probably justified as children at this stage were likely to have made emotional and social adjustments on entering school for the first time. An interruption in their educational program may have caused problems for some children.

As teacher absenteeism seems to be unavoidable, it raises questions on the most effective method in covering the classes of absent teachers. On the one hand, internal relief is likely to utilise teachers who have some knowledge of students and their current learning programs. This may involve the doubling up of classes or the loss of non-contact time when planning for and correction of students work is usually undertaken. On the other hand, information contained within Education Department files indicates that relief teachers are of assistance in continuing learning programs because they permit school routine to proceed in an orderly way, relieving staff from the added workload and pressures involved in supervision and doubling of classes. Furthermore, teachers who come to work when they are ill are unlikely to teach efficiently or effectively and rostering off or sending students home not only affects academic performance but breaks their routine.

Although this information is not the result of a formal study, it is logical to presume that, during the past three decades, teacher absenteeism and an inadequately funded relief teacher program have interfered with schools' abilities to maintain student learning programs which in turn affect student achievements.

Professional development

Lately, Australians are being exhorted by the Federal Government to become a `clever country.' It is logical to expect that education is likely to play a major role in this aspect of our country's development. Worldwide educational innovations and changes are likely to mean that initial training of educators must be backed by opportunities to access new information through in-service training and professional development. When information in Tasmanian Education Department files is reviewed, it becomes apparent that, although such development is applauded, the process is not supported by adequate funds.

Professional development and in-service training opportunities were put at risk when fund allocations for the supply of relief teachers were decreased in 1980 resulting in the cancellation of teacher seminars. This

was likely to have placed teachers in the North Western Region at a disadvantage as many of the people in this region were in their initial years of service and placed in isolated schools. Teachers considered that it was of the utmost importance that they were given both the means and the opportunity to attend in-service seminars. These seminars provided opportunities for essential communications with colleagues in less isolated areas (Bush, 29th August, 1980, File 17/4/17).

As many of these isolated schools had few staff members, some with only one or two teachers, these seminars were likely to have contributed to their on-going development and effectiveness as teachers. Although the purpose of these seminars was likely to be the introduction of the latest educational trends and teaching methods, they also provided opportunities for teachers to discuss ideas, problems and solutions. Therefore, in these schools the provision of funds for relief teachers was even more essential.

Funds for professional development, in 1985-86, were threatened by cut-backs of 50 percent and this caused alarm among members of the Professional Development Committee (Chairman, 31st October, 1985, File 17/4/17) and the Southern Region Consultants (Co-ordinator, 19th June, 1986). Funding cuts meant that fewer relief teachers would be employed to cover the classes of teachers attending these programs and, unless schools could cover the absences internally, teachers must attend seminars after school or forego training programs.

Since the early sixties, marked social changes, technological innovations and changes to school curricula have placed new demands on education and the quality of in-service training of teachers is an important element in this educational progress. During the seventies, because it was felt that an initial period of teacher training was unlikely to equip teachers for a lifetime of teaching, a substantial amount of Commonwealth funding was provided (Phillips, pp.1985, 345-346). This meant that relief teachers could be employed to take the places of teachers attending professional development seminars during school time.

It is likely, however, that a nationwide recession during the late eighties and nineties has forced the Commonwealth Government to make substantial cuts in education funding thereby reducing finance for the employment of relief teachers. If insufficient funding for in-service

training continues, it is questionable as to whether Tasmania will be able to maintain the present standard of education.

Demand and Supply

Although it was the Education Department's policy to sanction the appointment of relief teachers to cover long and short term absences of regular teachers, there was still the problem of the supply of relief staff meeting demand. High schools in particular suffered, at times, because of the highly specialised nature of many high school subjects. There had been problems in obtaining suitably qualified teachers to cover absences, especially in rural areas (Minister for Education, 5th November, 1970, File 32/3/18).

Because teachers were in short supply and were not always replaced in the school from which they had been transferred, school principals were often required to find their own relief teachers from the local area and questions were raised about the quality of available relief teachers. The principal of a West Coast school stated that there appeared to be a higher turnover of teachers in West Coast schools than in other areas of the state. Although the Education Department made every effort to fill these vacancies, there were not always teachers available for transfer. He was disturbed by articles, which had appeared in the *Advocate*, criticizing the quality of relief teachers available to West Coast schools. It had been reported that some of these teachers had been out of the teaching profession for some time and were likely to be out of touch with modern methods (*Advocate*, 5th August,1970, File 32/3/18).

In reply to these articles, he noted that many of these women did not wish to return to teaching as they were busy with young families, but approached their work with enthusiasm and professionalism, even though their job was only temporary. He continued:

> ***The onus ... falls on the headmaster of the school to use his own local knowledge in obtaining the services of the persons whom he considers qualified and suitable to act as relieving teachers. In practically every case he will draw upon the services and goodwill of someone who is a qualified teacher, or has had enough experience to justify his confidence in their ability to carry out the duties required.***
>
> ***(Ibid.)***

A shortage of teachers continued to create difficulties and at one point jeopardized the implementation of Commonwealth in-service training programs proposed for 1974. At this time it was questionable as to

whether sufficient relief teachers could be employed to cover the classes of teachers attending these programs. Schools had been asked by the Education Department to provide lists of relief teachers but it appeared that only 200 were available (General Secretary,Tasmanian Teachers' Federation, 12th November, 1973, File32/3/18).

From 1982 to 1984, an unusually high number of long-term illnesses among teachers and the Education Department's encouragement of increased participation in professional development activities contributed to further demands for relief teachers. But, because financial constraints limited their employment, stress and workloads increased and so the potential for ill health escalated among those left to carry the extra work-load (Northern Regional Director, 27th January, 1983, File 17/4/17).

Statistics for 1982 showed that primary schools in the Southern Region used 1684.5 relief days while a further 1759 days were covered internally by schools (Southern Regional Director, 21st January, 1983, File 17/4/17). Although these figures indicate that internal coverage was utilised slightly more than relief, unfortunately the number of schools involved was not quoted, therefore it is impossible to estimate the effect on school routine and interruptions to student learning.

The month of May, 1983, was likely to have been a particularly difficult one for high schools in the Southern Region in that 729 teachers days were lost but relief was only provided for 218 days (source unknown, 26th June, 1983, File 17/4/17). Comparisons made between the number of relief days used in high schools for October 1983 and October 1984 showed that during "this period the number of days absent rose from 363 to 636, [while] the number of days' relief for this purpose rose from 123.5 to 277" (Southern Regional Director, 19th November, 1984, File 17/4/17).

These statistics indicate that schools covered over half the absences internally and, while, in the past, the number of people available to fill relief positions had been inadequate, it was generally insufficient funding which forced schools to cover absences in this way. Because these figures are related to a region rather than specific schools it is not possible to assess accurately the disruption to students' education as teacher absences may have been over a short period of time in a large number of schools. In this instance, the interruptions to the schools' educational program may have been minimal. It is, however,

conceivable that some of these absences may have been long term, or that several teachers within a school were absent for short periods and that the employment of a relief teacher would have allowed administrators and school staff to continue the school's educational program with minimum disruption.

Qualifications

Relief teachers working in Tasmania during the 1960's were not always fully qualified. This situation arose because of the shortage of teachers. A retired teacher stated that the situation in the sixties and seventies was so critical that some of the people employed by the Education Department to cover long term absences had no teacher training. She continued:

> ***Once we had a young girl from Melbourne who was trained in the design field. She was sent to teach art although she was not trained as an art teacher. She was sent there at eight o'clock in the morning and put straight into the classroom and she did her level best to do the job.***
>
> ***(Interview 7)***

While these relief teachers may have worked with enthusiasm and diligence, their effectiveness as teachers was questionable. Even trained teachers taking over a class at a moment's notice, without preparation, find it difficult (Drake, 1981, p.75). It can only be wondered how much more difficult the job must have been with little or no knowledge of school routine, teaching methods and curricula.

Although many schools kept their own list of relief teachers there was no guarantee that any of those teachers would be available on a particular day. In a situation where none of the teachers on a school's list were available, the principal could request assistance from the Commonwealth Employment Service in the employment of a relief teacher. In 1987-88, problems arose in the recruitment of suitable relief staff.

At times, teachers sent to schools on relief assignments had proved unacceptable to the principal (Tasmanian Teachers' Federation, 10th March, 1982, File 17/4/7). The quality and effectiveness of these people came under scrutiny from members of the community. The Northern Council of Parents'and Friends' Associations expressed their dissatisfaction with some of the relief teachers recruited through the Commonwealth Employment Service because the teachers obtained

were not always appropriate for a particular classroom situation. The Association felt that the old system, where the school had a list of relief teachers upon which it could call, was far more satisfactory because the school knew these teachers and their abilities (11th September, 1987, File 17/7/32).

These comments demonstrate a lack of understanding of the problems confronting principals endeavouring to cover the classes of absent teachers. At times, the number of relief teachers available is likely to decline (McIntire et al, 1982, p.702). This may leave principals few alternatives and relief teachers unknown to them and unfamilar with the school are employed.

Further difficulties arose when student teachers were given relief assignments by the Commonwealth Employment Service. A shortage of relief teachers brought about the situation where students who had successfully completed three years of teacher training could register as relief teachers.

The Tasmanian Teachers' Federation while applauding their enthusiasm felt that relief teaching was a difficult job and if it was to be done successfully required experience and above average teaching ability. The Federation noted that there had been complaints about the ability of inexperienced teachers to control classes. This lack of control led to time wasting and discipline problems and did nothing for the status of relief teachers in the eyes of the teaching profession. They considered that there was a growing body of opinion which felt that these problems resulted from the use of inexperienced students as relief teachers (General Secretary, 18th October, 1988, File 17/7/32).

The Director-General of Education replied that these students had been asked to make themselves available after completing successful practice teaching sessions. Principals had accepted these students because there was a shortage of relief teachers, especially in such areas as mathematics, science, home economics and manual arts. He stated that the Commonwealth Employment Service had been advised that these students would be acceptable if qualified, experienced relief teachers were not available and emphasised that current students should only be used in their area of specialisation. No data is provided on the number of students used or whether a few or all experienced problems while relief teaching (24th October, 1988, File 17/732).

The use of retired teachers and those on leave without pay came under criticism. Permission was granted by the Director-General of Education for the use of teachers on leave without pay to act as relief teachers if no other suitable replacement could be found. While he did not wish this practice to become widespread, the Director-General realised that sometimes a situation arose when no other teacher was available and that permission to use a teacher on leave without pay would be granted in an emergency (30th April, 1987, File 17/7/32).

Sometimes retired teachers were employed as relief teachers as some schools preferred to use them because they were likely to know the schools, having worked in them as full-time teachers. They were often known and liked by the children and were familiar with the routine and therefore they fitted in well with the school (Interview 2).

The employment of retired teachers for relief also drew criticism (Glover, 11th January, 1989, File 17/7/32). In a letter to the Minister of Education, she considered that younger, fully trained people should have the opportunity to earn a living in their "chosen careers." While admiring their initiative and enthusiasm, she felt these senior citizens could put their abilities to use in community and charity work. Mrs Glover continued that these people had had their opportunities and it was time to let young people gain teaching experience.

The Minister for Education replied that most of the people employed as relief teachers were young people just out of training or experienced teachers who had previously taught with the Education Department and were now seeking to return to full-time employment. Retired teachers were only employed from time to time. The Department was encouraging young people who had just completed their training to work as relief teachers so that they could gain valuable experience (25th January, 1989, File 17/7/32).

Questions arise as to the wisdom of employing inexperienced teachers rather than those with prior regular class teaching experience. Those who have the knowledge and expertise developed through a number of years of teaching experience are likely to be more effective teachers, thereby more able to continue students' learning program. Retired teachers who return to the schools in which they have taught previously may be familiar with the routines and pupils within the school. On the other hand relief work may provide teachers, who are unable to gain

employment in a regular classroom position, the chance to hone their skills as teachers. This in turn is likely to enhance their opportunities for employment. However, while it is important for newly trained teachers to participate in work experience, it might be debated that unless the these people have sufficient expertise and experience, they may be unable to cope with the demands of relief teaching. Educators from the United States of America (see Chapter 1) assert that this work demands all the skills of the regular teacher plus the ability to teach unfamiliar students and provide educational activities suitable for a particular class at a moment's notice. If, as the Tasmanian Teachers' Federation claims, relief teaching requires experience and above average teaching ability (General Secretary, 18th October, 1988, File 17/7/32), will it be in the students' best interests to employ inexperienced teachers when more experienced people are available?

Payment

In 1982, Tasmanians were among the lowest paid relief teachers in Australia. There was no allowance made for qualifications and experience as all these people were paid at a flat rate (Australian Teachers' Federation 26th November, 1982, File 17/4/17). Regular classroom teachers are paid according to experience and qualifications. Therefore, it seems inequitable that relief teachers were not recognised in the same way and paid accordingly.

Conditions were improved when, on the 21st September, 1988, the Industrial Commission handed down its decision on the Tasmanian Teachers' Federation's application for an increase in the rates of pay for relief teachers which was to take effect from 15th September, 1988. The Commissioner of the Industrial Commission awarded a new method of calculating rates of pay which took into account the qualifications and experience of the teacher as well as removing the 20% discount. It was predicted that costs would rise by $300 000 for the 1988-89 financial year and an increase in expenditure on relief for the 1987-88 financial year (Director-General of Education, 22nd September, 1988, File 17/ 7/32).

This decision, while giving award coverage to relief teachers for the first time, was to significantly complicate procedures for payment. To enable the payment of the appropriate award, relief teachers would have to be placed on a salary rung according to experience and

qualifications, with the daily rate being determined by dividing the salary by 200, this being the equivalent of the number of working days in a school year (The Director-General of Education, 28th September, 1988, File 17/7/32).

While these increases were likely to have been welcomed by the Tasmanian Teachers' Federation, the Education Department was faced with a financial problem resulting from this award. The substantial increases in payments for relief teachers could not be absorbed by existing funds allocated for this purpose. If the increases could not be met, the implications were that it would be extremely difficult to provide coverage for classes whose teachers were absent through illness or out of the school working on such things as secondary renewal and the Tasmanian Certificate of Education. It was a possibility that classes would be left unsupervised or sent home (Minister For Education And The Arts, 19th October, 1988, File 17/7/32).

While undoubtedly relief teachers deserve to be paid in accordance with their qualifications and experience, this places more pressure on government finances. During 1990, the then Minister for Education, Peter Patmore announced that schools would be given allocations to cover relief teachers. Schools could choose to cover the absences from their own resources and therefore, any money not spent would be refunded at the end of the year to be used in any way it deemed appropriate (*Mercury*, 24th September, 1990, p.2).

In times when money for schools is likely to be under allocated, the temptation to cover absences internally must be great. This in turn places pressure on teachers in the form of extra workloads or coming to school when unwell. In circumstances when illnesses are prolonged or frequent, it could not be supposed that teachers would continue to work effectively or student learning remain uninterrupted. This also raises queries as to whether the money saved will really be of benefit to the school in promoting ongoing educational programs.

CONCLUSION

Prior to the sixties, teachers within schools were used to cover the classes of absent teachers and this system of internal relief was possible because the curriculum was set for the class as a whole. However, during the past three decades teachers began planning and implemen-

ting programs to suit the needs of individual children and relief teachers were utilised because they allowed other members of staff to continue their own teaching programs thereby minimising interruptions to school routine.

Over the past 30 years, the need for these teachers has been documented within Tasmanian Education Department files. Principals, parent groups and the Tasmanian Teachers' Federation have expressed concern that, without these people, learning programs for students, professional development and ongoing educational progress cannot be maintained.

While the Tasmanian Government supports the program it has, in the past, failed to provide sufficient funding for its continuation and schools have been forced to use their own resources to cover teacher absences. Inadequate funding coupled with shortages of relief teachers is likely to have compromised schools' ability to effectively perpetuate students' academic progress.

While literature from the United States of America suggests that relief teachers are generally less effective than the regular teacher, the Tasmanian experience tends to suggest that student progress is greater when a relief teacher is used than when schools have to cope without one.

In the past, Tasmanian relief teachers were paid at a flat rate but in 1988 the Industrial Commission handed down a new award rate where qualifications and experience were the basis for calculating rates of pay. This, plus a more efficient system of payment whereby these teachers are paid with fewer delays than in the past, has resulted in some improvement of working conditions.

CHAPTER 3

POLICIES AND WORKING CONDITIONS IN RELATION TO RELIEF TEACHING IN AUSTRALIA

INTRODUCTION

Under the Australian federal system, education is principally the responsibility of the states. Consequently, difficulties arise when attempts are made to generalise about the policies and practices of the six state and two territory education departments or ministries operating within Australia.

In order to compare the policies and career structures for relief teachers in each state, information was sought from education departments, ministries and teacher unions/federations. Education departments and unions were asked to provide the following information:

- the role of the relief teacher;
- the general teaching and supervisory duties which relief teachers might be expected to undertake;
- the preparation of lesson plans or units of work by relief teachers;
- periods of employment;
- the problems associated with relief teaching;
- the current position with employment and wages for relief teachers;
- the changes which have occurred for relief teachers over the past ten years, for example, an increase or decrease of opportunities for relief work, changes in wages and conditions, whether there are a greater number of relief teachers available;
- the backgrounds, gender, experience and qualifications of people who work as relief teachers;
- identify and explain any other issues relating to relief teaching.

There were some difficulties associated with obtaining this information. Many of the answers were brief and/or not specific and some departments and teacher unions had to be contacted several times

before information could be obtained.

RELIEF TEACHER CATEGORIES

Throughout Australia relief teachers are generally employed to cover the classes of teachers absent through illness, professional development courses, attendance at teacher union executive meetings, representation in state teams and principals' meetings. Although relief teachers are likely to perform the same role, there is some variation in the way in which they may be categorised.

The information received from education departments, ministries, teachers' federations and unions indicate, that in Tasmania, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and the Northern Territory, relief teachers are employed on a casual basis . This ad hoc method of employing casual teachers can create problems when there are not enough of these people available to cover the classes of absent teachers. Situations such as this have arisen in Tasmania when, at times, there have been insufficient relief teachers to cover classes whose teachers are absent through illness or attending professional development courses (General Secretary Tasmanian Teachers' Federation, 12 November, 1973 File 32/3/18).

Other states have organised a system of permanent relieving teachers and, while they still employ teachers on a casual basis, it is likely that these people are generally used when there are insufficient permanent relieving staff. In South Australia, relieving teachers are permanent employees who are used to cover short term absences anywhere in the state at a few day's notice (South Australian Institute of Teachers). The Department of Education in Queensland employs local relieving teachers (LRTs) and district relieving teachers (DRTs) who are permanent employees of the Department of Education and are attached to schools to provide relief for teachers absent from classroom duties. In Victoria, statewide permanent relieving teachers are those who have applied for and gained a relieving teacher position through the normal channels of advertisement and appointment. These teachers are appointed to, and work from, a base school from which they are directed to schools where a relief teacher is required .

There are a number of advantages in organising a system of permanent relief teachers. At times, when there are shortages of casual staff, at least some schools will be provided with relief cover. Because some of

these people are based at a school and travel to other schools in that area, they are likely to have an advantage over casual teachers as research within schools in Chicago found that cadre relief teachers are generally considered to be more effective than those who only work in a particular school occasionally. Those people who are regular relief teachers demonstrated the ability to manage classes and provide continuity of instruction (Meara, 1983, p. 54, Drake, 1981. p.74, and Johnson et al, 1988, p.89 and McIntire, 1982, p. 702).

It is likely that relief teachers who obtain a permanent position also have better attitudes towards their work. Rawson (1981, 84) feels that the hiring of a corps of full-time relief teachers could eliminate low motivation that frequently accompanies the temporary status of relief teaching. But there are disadvantages for casual teachers in this system, as informal discussions with former permanent relief teachers from Victoria revealed that opportunities for these people decreased when other teachers were appointed to permanent relief positions.

While a system of permanent relief teachers is likely to be more efficient than that which employs casual staff, evidence documented in the previous chapter implies that, for Tasmania, the cost of employing these people is likely to be prohibitive. Permanent relief teachers would be entitled to the same working conditions as regular classroom teachers and such items as paid sick leave and holiday pay are likely to mean a substantial rise in payroll costs.

POLICIES RELATING TO THE APPOINTMENT OF RELIEF TEACHERS

Although it is the policy of education departments and ministries throughout Australia to make provision for the appointment of relief teachers to cover the absence of regular teachers, in some states financial limitations mean that their employment is likely to be on a restricted basis.

In the previous chapter, data from files and interviews with former teachers illustrate the deleterious effects of insufficient funding in this area on Tasmanian schools. The Queensland Teachers' Union has also noted similar problems resulting from an inadequate allocation of teacher relief days to schools. The Union has expressed concern that the movement away from the use of permanent and casual staff to fill

long term vacancies and a greater reliance on internal supervision will hinder schools' ability to provide viable educational programs for students. Teachers are hampered because non-contact time for preparation and correction has been cut to the minimum and in some cases abolished altogether. Teaching loads of subject masters and mistresses have been increased thus reducing duties other than teaching below the Queensland Education Department's recommendation of 50 percent.

The inability of education departments in Tasmania and Queensland to provide adequate relief cover, coupled with a lack of communication and clear directives, leaves schools to decide whether they should employ a relief teacher or cover the absence internally. The Tasmanian Teachers' Federation states that Tasmanian Education Department policy is lacking in the area of relief teaching, with the responsibility for providing guidelines being left to school principals. The uncertainty as to whether Regional Offices will grant requests for relief days and the laissez-faire attitude of the Education Department is likely to result in the inability on the part of schools to plan ahead for such activities as professional development, the release of teachers to supervise school excursions, camps and sports teams.

While complaints have been registered about the lack of guidelines relating to relief teaching, information contained in Tasmanian Education Department files implies that the allocation of relief days is generally fully utilised. However, Queensland schools experienced the opposite situation because inadequate information and a seemingly insufficient quota of relief days in 1983-84, found many school principals in Queensland 'hoarding' their teacher relief days because of the uncertainty regarding their availability. At the end of the semester, these principals found they were unable to transfer these days to the following semester. The problem arose partly because of the confusion as to whether or not the Teacher Relief Scheme days could be used for professional development release, as principals in at least one region received contradictory advice from their regional office. This had affected teachers' professional development as some principals had refused to employ relief teachers when planned absences were less than one day. To attend these seminars, in some cases teachers were forced to double up classes (Queensland Teachers' Union).

The conserving of relief days had unforeseen consequences as the Education Department, in what might have been either a lack of communication or the need to economize, cut funding for the relief program. The Queensland Teachers' Union claims that the restricted use of Teacher Relief Scheme days has an effect on the allocation of funds for the scheme in the following year. The Union feels that, if the relief teacher scheme should continue, at the very least there must be a substantial overall allocation of relief days.

The Tasmanian Teachers' Federation has formulated a number of policies and recommendations in relation to relief teaching. The Federation feels that pools of relief teachers should be established to cater for the needs of schools. These teachers, while being available to cover the classes of teachers absent on a temporary basis, would be employed on a permanent basis enjoying all the rights of full time teachers including pre-service and in-service training. It also proposes that the Tasmanian Government and the Education Department increase funds for relief teaching so that full cover can be provided for teachers absent through illness, a free afternoon a week for principals with full-time classroom responsibilities to allow them to perform administrative duties and three relief days per teacher per year for professional development activities. When relief or replacement staff are not appointed, the Federation recommends that classes should be excluded from attendance at school on a rostered basis arranged at the discretion of the principal.

Although students' education is likely to be adversely affected and more stress and extra work placed on teachers by internal supervision, it is likely that there needs to be some compromise between the attitudes of education departments and the teacher unions and federations in relation to the provision for the relief teacher scheme. On the one hand, while unions and federations may be requesting the employment of relief teachers on an unrestricted basis in the anticipation that departments will make a greater provision for the scheme, it is likely that it is impossible to predict teacher absences and budget accordingly. On the other hand, the Education Department cannot expect teachers to maintain educational standards if they are forced to supervise internally on a long term or consistent basis.

While there is pressure on administrators, specialists and school staff in

Tasmania and Queensland to maximise internal relief and to avoid using relief teachers, in Western Australia, internal relief is paid to teachers who are employed at the school and who undertake relief duties during time-tabled non-contact time (Western Australian Ministry of Education).

This may not always provide the best possible learning environment for students as over use of the internal relief scheme is likely to have a negative effect on the educational program within the school. During the wage case in 1989 in which Western Australian teachers were granted payment for undertaking relief duties, Commissioner Martin (Western Australian Industrial Commission, 6 July, 1989) reviewed the proposition that the use of external relief teachers was preferable to that of internal relief teachers. He continued:

> ***The proposal sought to apply an emphasis on the use of external relief teachers in preference to the use of internal relief thus ensuring, as far as possible, a more efficient and productive teaching service. By ensuring the DOTT time [duties other than teaching time] afforded to teachers, it was considered the productivity and effectiveness of the delivery of education would be enhanced and assist in the reduction of teacher stress***
>
> ***(p.17)***

Payment for internal relief is likely to provide some compensation for the loss of DOTT or non-contact time but teachers undertaking internal relief must complete duties, which would normally be undertaken during these periods, at some other time. For some teachers the additional payment may be a bonus, but it is debatable whether students benefit when their teachers are undertaking internal relief for extended periods.

THE PREFERRED ROLE OF THE RELIEF TEACHER

Comments relating to the role of the relief teacher were of a general nature, but it is likely that state and territory education departments and ministries in Australia expect relief teachers to undertake all the teaching and general supervisory duties which would have been performed by the absent teacher on that day.

The Tasmanian Education Department subscribes to this policy (Tasmanian Industrial Commission, 1987, p.825) but in practice, this may not always be feasible because it fails to make allowances for the

occasions when the only relief teachers available do not replicate the expertise of the absent teacher.

While in agreement with the above policy, the Northern Territory Department of Education has recognised this problem and has allowed a degree of flexibility in its guidelines relating to the role of the relief teacher as problems are likely to occur, especially in high schools, when the training of the relief teacher does not match that of the regular teacher. Difficulties are likely to occur when the relief teacher teaches at a different level in a subject or is trained in another specialist area. In the primary area, the general expectation of this Department and its schools is that the relieving teacher is a duplicate of the absent teacher and is expected to cover as much as possible of the work which would have been covered by the absent teacher.

The Western Australian Ministry of Education considers that the main role of the relief teacher is one which ensures the safety and supervision in the class of the absent teacher and where possible the relief teacher is expected to follow the ongoing educational program. Evidence produced in the Western Australian Industrial Commission (July, 1989, p.23) suggests that some teachers in this state choose or are required to do far more than classroom and yard duty.

The State School Teachers' Union Of Western Australia conducted a survey which consisted of a sample of 600 relief teachers and had a response rate of 33.33 percent (Western Australian Industrial Commission, June 1989, p.120). From this survey, the Union (ibid., July 1989, p.23) found that 27 percent of relief teachers had at some time written reports, 23 percent had attended parent/student conference meetings, 36 percent had marked a backlog of work, 17 percent had attended special conferences on individual students, 93 percent had done yard duty and 30 percent had attended special events.

While the response rate of this survey amounted to only one-third of the sample, it does provide more specific information about the activities undertaken by some relief teachers. The study does not indicate whether these activities were performed while teachers were on long or short term assignments but it is likely that such tasks as report writing, conferences on and with individual students and their parents would require a certain amount of familiarity with school policies and procedures, and students. Therefore, it is unlikely that relief teachers

working in a school for a short time would be required to perform these tasks. The most likely duty outside classroom teaching is that of supervising children in the yard during recess and lunch.

PLANNING OF LESSONS BY THE RELIEF TEACHER

Generally, ministries and education departments throughout Australia expect the relief teacher to plan lessons so that students' education can continue during the absence of the regular teacher. The Australian Teachers' Federation states:

> ***In general, what relief teachers would do if they only relieved for one or two days is to assess where the teacher is in the curriculum and take some revision lessons with students to assist them to go over recent work.***

The ability of the relief teacher to fulfil the expectations of the school in continuing the educational program currently being implemented in a particular classroom is likely to be dependent upon the availability of such relevant information as timetables, programs of work, classroom and school policies and procedures, and lesson plans. In practice, relief teachers are likely to find that this information is often inadequate or unavailable. Informal discussions with some Tasmanian relief teachers and personal experience reveal that information is not always provided, not only when the absence is caused by illness but when the regular teacher has planned to attend seminars and in-service training courses.

In Tasmania, because many schools prefer relief teachers to come prepared, it is advisable that they plan lessons or units of work for the grades they might be expected to teach (Tasmanian Industrial Commission, 1987, p.799 and Tasmanian Education Department). This attitude was criticised by a Tasmanian principal because he felt that it was not possible for a teacher to provide educationally valid activities for unknown children. He stated that, as most infant and primary schools developed individual programs, an overall lesson plan for the day would not have much meaning (ibid., p.800).

It is likely that individual schools and the circumstances relating to the teacher absence, such as the period of employment and the availability of information relating to the teaching program, decide whether relief teachers are required to prepare lessons. The Northern Territory Department of Education, and Western Australian Ministry of Educ-

ation state that ideally the staff member who is absent would provide an outline of the day's lessons but, as in Tasmania, relief teachers are advised to have pre-planned lessons suitable for a number of levels or grades in the event that the class teacher has the program at home or it is incomplete or in some cases is unworkable.

In the Australian Capital Territory (Australian Capital Territory Department of Education), the absent staff member is expected to provide an outline for the day's lessons with the school supervisor aiding and instructing the relief teacher. If the absence were to be longer than a few days, the person relieving would be expected to take over the planning of lessons and units.

Further evidence is revealed, in the statistics from the survey conducted by the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, that work plans and programs are not always available (Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission, July, 1989, pp.22-23). Relief teacher responses showed that 38 percent of teachers had found adequate work instructions, 60 percent had found some instructions and 26 percent had found no work instructions. (These figures do add up to more than 100 percent because the format of the survey allowed respondents to fill in more than one box). Although the figures represent a relatively small sample of the relief teacher population, they intimate that some of these people are not given the kind of assistance which could help them plan and implement activities which are relevant to the current curriculum within a particular classroom thereby enhancing students' academic progress.

When lesson plans are inadequate or unavailable, relief teachers must make their own provisions. The Union (ibid., p.23) states that when the instructions for work were inadequate, 13 percent of teachers supervised private study or reading, 41 percent sought assistance from a senior teacher, 78 percent devised their own lessons from school material and 58 percent brought their own prepared lessons.

While it is commendable that many of these relief teachers should choose to do more than supervise when no instructions or programs of work have been left, the students' education is likely to suffer if a particular teacher is absent on a long term basis. Schools, intent on implementing the policy where the relief teacher is expected to take over the duties of the absent teacher, are likely to ensure that the

necessary information is current and available so that unplanned teacher absences or poor organisation do not jeopardise students' educational opportunities.

Relief teachers who go to an assignment well-prepared are not only making their own job easier but are likely to be a valuable asset to the school. The survey conducted by the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, found that while 84 percent of teachers present the work planned by the regular teacher in a lesson format, 63 percent of teachers were able to provide additional material (Western Australian Industrial Commission, July, 1989, p.23). Teachers such as these are likely to be more effective in enhancing students' education than those who choose to supervise private study and reading, especially if the absence of the regular teacher is longer than a few days.

Information about lesson plans, that is the material that has been covered and what is to follow, can assist the relief teacher to assess what he/she can do to provide valid educational activities. Without such information, a relief teacher may find the task of continuing students' education difficult because he/she is likely to have to assess the levels students have achieved before preparing and administering lessons.

PERIODS OF EMPLOYMENT

Generally, relief teachers throughout Australia are employed for short periods of time, although there are slight variations between states as to minimum and maximum periods of employment for these teachers. The most common period of employment for relief teachers is of one or two days duration (Australian Teachers' Federation).

Tasmania, the Northern Territory and Victoria state that relief teachers may only work for 20 consecutive days in one school while the maximum in South Australia is 19 days and in Queensland 10. Relief teachers in Tasmania and South Australia, who are required for more than 20 consecutive days in a school, may be engaged as temporary employees. If the relief teacher has already been in the classroom for several days prior to being granted a temporary appointment, this arrangement allows them to continue with and/or implement programs of work thereby keeping the disruption of students' routine to a minimum. In Queensland, when the period of relief is anticipated to be greater than or exceeds the maximum time, a teacher, assigned on a

temporary appointment rather than a casual basis, would normally be employed.

Because there are no extra teachers in primary schools in New South Wales, there may be problems in covering the classes of absent teachers. This is likely to be the reason primary schools are required to cover only one out of every two days whereas high schools must cover two out of three. While relief teachers in New South Wales are generally employed for periods of one or two days, some flexibility is allowed in relation to covering the classes of teachers involved in courses (New South Wales Department of Education) Relief teachers in the Australian Capital Territory are regularly employed for short periods although there are some schools with internal relief teachers. A "number of teachers are under-allocated and do 'extras' to cover some absences" (The Australian Capital Territory Education Department).

While relief teaching provides employment opportunities, especially for those who are unable to gain a permanent position, relief teachers must contend with the irregularity and transient nature of this work, and they must be able to adapt to a variety of schools. A principal presenting evidence in a Tasmanian Industrial Commission hearing (1987, p.802) stated that if these teachers fail to provide valid educational activities in a particular class there may be little chance of re-employment in that school.

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH RELIEF TEACHINGS

Although one of the major problems relating to relief teaching was reported to be a shortage of relief teachers, the problem is not always associated with their availability but rather the lack of inclination to accept some assignments. The Queensland Department of Education noted that availability of relief teachers in certain areas may be related to the location of some schools. Tasmania, the Northern Territory, Western Australian and New South Wales education departments state that finding those prepared to travel long distances is a problem.

The isolation of some schools in Tasmania, especially on the West Coast, combined with mountainous terrain and poor roads often makes access to these schools difficult. To compound the problem, many of

the areas may be two or more hours drive from the main cities and towns where many relief teachers are likely to reside. Therefore, it is not surprising that relief teachers are not always available to teach in these areas because of the general inconvenience associated with the time and prohibitive cost of travel. Added to this is the likelihood of greater availability of opportunities to work closer to home because there may be a larger number of educational institutions in less isolated regions.

Many large state schools in New South Wales also find they cannot always get enough relief teachers. This is especially true of newly developed areas as there are often fewer teachers living there. Many teachers live in more established areas and work in schools in their area (New South Wales Education Department). Education departments in Tasmania, the Northern Territory and Queensland observe that seasonal variations have an affect on the number of relief teachers available to cover the absences of regular teachers. Winter, especially in Tasmania, is often accompanied by cold and influenza epidemics which in turn is likely to mean greater teacher absences. Shortages are likely to occur in the Northern Territory towards the end of the year, as graduates take on permanent positions and many relief teachers are offered and accept limited tenure appointments.

While the isolation of schools and epidemics of illness contribute to the unavailability of relief teachers in Tasmania, the Departments of Education in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory report that there is a growing problem in obtaining relief teachers in all areas. This problem is due, in part, to the inflexibility of relief teachers as some will only teach in a limited number of schools and/or colleges in the secondary area, and for a limited number of days each week. The inability of some principals to find relief teachers willing to work in their schools may not only relate to the inflexibility of these people but the working conditions within those schools. Meara (1987, p.44) reports that some principals and administrators in Chicago have expressed the view that some schools have a lower rate of relief coverage because these teachers are hestitant to work in areas that are unfamiliar or those they consider to be more dangerous. It is likely that, in Australia, there are schools where the general behaviour of pupils is less than ideal and relief teachers are not readily accepted by students. Under these conditions relief teachers are more likely to be attracted to schools where the atmosphere is more congenial.

While the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory departments make this complaint, it must be realised that one of the advantages of relief teaching is that teachers can make the choice about where and how many days they teach. For some people, relief teaching provides the opportunity to pursue other activities and hobbies which are unrelated to the job. Mothers with young children may find that the flexibility of this work also allows time to attend to their needs.

The Australian Teachers' Federation agrees that one of the problems of relief teaching is maintaining the continuity of the education process so that student learning is not at risk. Although the Federation appears to see no solution to this problem, other than schools which have a curriculum coordinator who is able to brief the relief teacher on the work they would be expected to take, perhaps, as Rawson (1981, see Chapter 1) advocates, regular teachers need to be aware of the problems inherent in relief teaching and prepare policies and information which are likely to assist relief teachers.

While adequate lesson plans are of great assistance, student behaviour, the support of administrative staff and the effective organisation of relief teachers is also likely to have some bearing on the relief teacher's effectiveness in continuing the educational process. The Tasmanian Teachers' Federation and the Northern Territory Education Department have noted that relief teachers are likely to be hindered by negative student attitudes and lack of administrative support. This is supported by American educators documented in Chapter 1.

Problems within the school are not the only ones experienced by relief teachers. While this work is likely to provide some flexibilty for those who do not wish to work full-time, casual employment has some disadvantages. The inconvenience of being called at short notice and the uncertainty of the duration of employment is likely to mean that some relief teachers will have to vary personal and family organisation to accommodate requests from schools (Tasmanian Education Department).

Not only must relief teachers be prepared to reorganise their day, often at a moment's notice but, for those who work in a number of schools, the differing school policies and procedures are likely to create some problems. The Northern Territory Department of Education states that

the varying expectations and procedures, lack of information relating to school organisation and duties, inability to understand class programs, and varying starting and finishing times are some of the problems associated with relief teaching.

Although the Australian Capital Territory Teachers' Federation and the Teachers' Federation of Victoria feel that lack of continuity and coming into a school 'cold' for a very short period of time can cause considerable problems, they do not indicate what these problems might be. It is likely if, as stated by the New South Wales Department of Education, they are called on the morning to teach classes, which could range from kindergarten to grade 6, relief teachers will need to prepare lesson plans to suit one of these classes and evidence presented in a Tasmanian Industrial wage case (1987, p.803) indicates that the inability of the relief teacher to plan "meaningful" activities often means that "children will make things unbearable."

The Tasmanian Teachers' Federation (Tasmanian Industrial Commission, 1987, p,802) and the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia (Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission, June 1989) suggest that when teachers are called upon at short notice to relieve in an unfamiliar situation and to deal with unfamiliar problems they may come under considerable stress. They continue:

> ***... a reliever faces a group of students that could range in age from pre-primary to year 12 to whom they owe a duty of care... in exactly the same way as the regular teacher [together with] all the other responsibilities that a regular classroom teacher owes to a class of students.*** ***p.123***

Problems are likely to exist for schools employing relief teachers. Because people who work as relief teachers are transitory, it may be difficult for education departments and schools to check whether they are suitable for all or any relief appointments. The Northern Territory Department of Education states that the quality of relief teachers is unknown until tried, some teachers may lack knowledge of the Northern Territory curriculum and there are language difficulties with some teachers from overseas.

The problems created by the relief teacher's lack of knowledge of school curricula may be compounded by the lack of opportunity to attend professional development courses where new ideas and teaching

methods are introduced. The Australian Capital Territory Teachers' Federation states that one of the greatest problems with relief teaching is that many of these teachers are working nearly full-time and are unable to attend these courses.

Under these circumstances some relief teachers would benefit from training courses which would inform them about new methods and educational trends, unlike training courses advocated in the United States of America (see Chapter 1) which tend to focus on aspects usually covered in initial teacher training courses These teachers would probably have to attend on an unpaid basis after school hours as it is unlikely state governments could support such a program.

THE BACKGROUND, GENDER, EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS OF PEOPLE WORKING AS RELIEF TEACHERS IN AUSTRALIA.

Although people wishing to work as relief teachers in Australia must either be interviewed and/or provide proof of their qualifications and experience, it is likely that statistics relating to the background, experience, gender and qualifications of people working as relief teachers are not readily available as the information received from education departments and teacher unions throughout Australia is of a general nature. The Australian Capital Territory Teachers' Federation and the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia (Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission, June 1989) are exceptions as they have conducted surveys and have provided some statistics relating to the background of people working as relief teachers in their territory and state.

The lack of specific information may be due to the fact that relief teachers are not part of a relatively static staff population in schools. They may opt for a different career or be offered permanent positions in schools. The New South Wales, Western Australian and Northern Territory Education Departments report that graduates often work as relief teachers while they are waiting for a permanent teaching position while others in the Northern Territory may be on a working holiday and are likely to stay from as little as 3 to 6 months (Northern Territory Department of Education).

Tasmania, Queensland, the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales education authorities estimate that

relief teachers are predominantly female. Although the New South Wales Teachers' Federation was unable to provide background information about people who work as relief teachers in that state, a Federation representative estimated that there are probably three women to every man working in this area.

The Australian Capital Territory Teachers' Federation and the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australian (Western Australian Industrial Commission, June 1989, p.121) conducted surveys of relief teachers. Of the two hundred and eighteen questionnaires sent by the Australian Capital Territory Federation, ninety nine were returned. When the results were reviewed, the Federation found that 92 percent of relief teachers surveyed were female and in Western Australia, responses revealed that 87 percent (approximately 198) were female. Although these are small samples and there may be some doubt as to whether the results are representative of the population of relief teachers in the respective state and territory, it indicates that teachers undertaking this work tend to be female.

There are likely to be a greater number of female teachers engaged in relief work because many of them have resigned for a variety of reasons and are unable to regain a permanent position. In this student's experience, during the sixties and seventies in Tasmania, female teachers frequently resigned when starting a family because they felt leave provisions were inadequate. When family commitments lessened and they wished to return to work, some of these teachers found that regular teaching appointments were not readily available and undertook relief teaching. This situation has occurred in the Australian Capital Territory and Western Australia. The Capital Territory Teachers' Federation reports that 70-80 percent of the women who participated in the survey had previously been full time teachers and had resigned because of family responsibilities or a spouse's job required the family to move interstate.

Although many relief teachers are highly qualified and experienced, the Western Australian State School Teachers' Union (Western Australian Industrial Commission, June 1989, pp.123-124) found that some of the teachers surveyed worked as relief teachers because they were unable to obtain a permanent position. Often their permanency had lapsed because these women had left their jobs to raise a family, had moved from another state or from overseas.

The Federation continues:

> ***...the only means of achieving permanency is to be available for country service ...Various other reasons prevent people, particularly women ...from accepting country postings, for personal or family reasons. Husbands being in a position in the metro often means they can't accept country postings. They don't want to split the family ...which means they do not go for the permanency option.***

However, the Union did not indicate the number or percentage of people in this situation therefore it not possible to assess whether a few or many relief teachers find themselves unable to obtain postions as regular classroom teachers. There are slight variations between states in relation to the prerequisites required by the different education departments for people wishing to take up relief teaching. In Tasmania, the Northern Territory, New South Wales and South Australia the minimum qualification for relief teaching is three years trained. The Australian Capital Territory Teachers' Federation estimates that although some two year trained college teachers are employed, the majority of relief teachers, about two thirds, are three year of training. There are some teachers with a Ph.D. working as relief teachers in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

From the information and statistics received from education departments, ministries, teachers' federations and unions throughout Australia, it seems likely that there are relief teachers with a wide variety of qualifications and years of experience. It is equally likely that the quality and effectiveness of these teachers is just as varied. However, teachers who are well qualified and experienced may ultimately be disadvantaged because they are paid at a higher rate. Governments and education authorities, obsessed with cost cutting, might ultimately force schools to choose between these teachers and those with lower qualifications and experience.

WAGES AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The following information was received in 1989 thus reflecting the then current wage policies of the states and territories. A variety of pay scales for relief teachers and methods for calculating them exists throughout Australia.

As mentioned previously, in Tasmania, to enable the payment of the appropriate award rate, relief teachers are placed on a salary rung in

accordance with their qualifications and experience. The daily rate is then determined by dividing the salary by 200 (this is equivalent to the number of working days in a year). Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, and Western Australia pay relief teachers on the basis of their qualifications and experience.The Tasmanian Teachers' Federation won the award for relief teachers on the basis that they are expected to undertake all the teaching and general supervisory duties which the absent teacher would have undertaken on that day. They argued that relief teachers were also expected to have their own lesson plans as teachers' preparation was not always available .

In the Australian Capital Territory, the daily rates range from $117.05 to $163.46. After 6 years of service there is a qualifications barrier, the highest rate for 2 and 3 year trained teachers being $145.14. Teachers who are 4 year trained are paid the top rate ($163.46) after 9 years of service. Payments for relief work in Western Australia are made in accordance with a teacher's current salary grade using his/her qualifications and experience to determine the grade with rates ranging from $84 to $104.34. In 1989, the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia successfully defended the then current method of determining rates of payment on much the same basis as the Tasmanian Teachers' Federation used to win the 1988 award for relief teachers (Western Australian Industrial Commission, June 1989, p.121).

The daily payment made for relief teaching in Queensland is the equivalent of a teacher's full-time salary plus a 19% loading which is adjusted for the period worked. Daily rates at the 1st April 1989, ranged from $89.40 to $150 (Queensland Teachers' Union). South Australian daily payments for relief teachers are experience rated and range from $89.23 to $155.77 (Western Australian Industrial Commission, June 1989, p.121).

People working as relief teachers in Victoria and the Northern Territory are paid a flat rate. In Victoria, a 3 year trained teacher receives a daily rate of $107.60 and for a 4 year trained teacher the rate is $126.30. The Northern Territory has a flat rate of $114.00 per day (Western Australian Industrial Commission, June, 1989, p.121).

Some education departments and ministries have compensated their relief teachers for the of lack annual and sick leave by placing a

loading on rates of pay. Casual daily rates in New South Wales are higher than the normal weekly rates of pay for full-time teachers. As casuals have no provisions for holidays or sick leave, the daily rate has a loading in lieu of these. Western Australian relief teachers receive a casual loading of 20% of gross salary if relief is worked in blocks of five full days. "Pro rata annual leave is payable for blocks of relief for periods of 20 continuous full days or longer."

On the figures presented above it appears that working conditions have improved for relief teachers in Tasmania. As stated in Chapter 2, these teachers received, before 1988, the lowest rates in Australia. It would seem that the most qualified and experienced of these people are now among the highest paid relief teachers in the country.

The Australian Teachers' Federation considers that opportunities for relief work have increased and that more relief teachers are available. This would appear to be an accurate assessment of the situation in some states. But in Tasmania, while wages have risen, it is likely that opportunities for employment have not. The Tasmanian Teachers' Federation feels that the lessening of professional development activities in Tasmania (in 1989 there was 1/2 day per teacher per year for attendance at professional development seminars and workshops) has been a factor in creating a decline in opportunities for relief work. It is not possible to make a comparison with previous years, as figures for the number of these days were not made available.

As illustrated in Chapter 2, it is generally a lack of finance in Tasmania which limits the use of relief teachers. The Queensland Teachers' Union has noted that the same constraints are affecting its state. The Union states that the number of relief positions has declined in Queensland as enrolments have decreased and the education budget has been reduced, with many positions being redesignated as classroom positions.

Relief teachers, in other states, appear to have greater opportunities as some states report an increase in their employment. The Education Department and Teacher' Federation of New South Wales, the Northern Territory Education Department and the Teachers' Federation of Victoria estimate that the amount of relief work has increased in recent years although the Victorian Ministry of Education states that, in

Victoria, there is central and regional control over the circumstances under which relief teachers may be employed and the number of teacher relief days available to a school. The Northern Territory Education Department states that opportunities for the employment of relief teachers were made after the advent of the Whitlam Government as schools previously covered the absence of teachers internally.

Opportunities for some relief teachers have tended to fluctuate. The Ministry of Education in Western Australia states that there was an over supply of primary teachers during the 1980's which in turn led to plenty of relief teachers being available. In 1990, this over supply was considerably reduced, resulting in less teachers being available which in turn resulted in an increase in opportunities for those seeking relief work. Vacancies left by teachers taking such leave as maternity and long service leave often provide longer term positions for relief teachers.

The Australian Capital Territory Department of Education registers as many relief teachers as possible providing they merit registration, although opportunities for employment have remained the same over the last few years. The Department has noted that fewer relief teachers are available, so that those seeking relief work should not have difficulty in finding it.

Relief teachers who are seeking work may sometimes approach schools and make their availability for relief teaching known. People wishing to do relief teaching in Tasmania should be employed initially through the Commomwealth Employment Service although many principals are likely to make direct contact with teachers who have worked in their schools on previous occasions (Tasmanian Education Department).

In South Australia, it is the personal responsibility of a teacher wishing to undertake relief work to inform those schools of their availability, contact address, telephone number and relevant details (South Australian Education Department). Employment for relief teachers in Queensland is approved at a regional office but is initiated at school level (Queensland Education Department). The information from the states indicates that generally relief teachers are paid in accordance with their qualifications and/or experience. Although this is a more equitable

system, it does place demands on state finances when a number of highly qualified and experienced people are engaged in this work. Increased wages coupled with the current recession is likely to decrease opportunities for employment.

CONCLUSION

From the information gathered, it appears that teacher relief schemes are supported by all states and territories throughout Australia and education authorities are able to call on well qualified and experienced relief teachers whose expertise is likely to be of assistance in maintaining learning programs in schools. It is likely that many of these teachers are women and some, having resigned to raise families or moved interstate, are unable to gain permanent positions.

Although each state has its own policy on the role they would like the relief teacher to play, in theory these teachers are generally expected to take over the part of the absent teacher and continue with the learning program current in a particular classroom. It is questionable whether this occurs in practice as there is evidence to suggest that in some states lesson plans are likely to be unavailable or inadequate and the relief teacher is advised to bring preplanned lessons.

It is likely that, while many relief teachers are capable of carrying out the program of the absent teacher, planning by the regular teacher may be inadequate, and assistance from administrators and regular staff is lacking. Under these circumstances, unless the relief teacher is familiar with the students and curriculum in a particular classroom, student learning programs, as planned by the regular teacher, will not continue.

Information received from education authorities and teacher unions and federations indicates that the employment of a relief teacher can enhance the productivity of regular teachers because it reduces the stress regular teachers incur when workloads are increased through internal supervision. While the use of relief teachers is applauded by education departments and schools, it seems that clear directives and guidelines relating to their role are lacking. This combined with inadequate information left by the regular teacher and lack of administrative assistance means that relief teachers are likely to have to assess the levels students have reached and provide educationally valid activities all within a short space of time. Added to this, re-employment

at a particular school may be determined by the success or failure of the teacher to carry out these tasks.

It is, perhaps, a testament to the ability of relief teachers in Australia that, while there were comments relating to negative student behaviour and the disavantages of relief teachers being called at short notice, no complaints were registered relating to the ineffectiveness of these teachers. This is in direct contrast to the comments of authors in the United States of America (see Chapter 1). In fact, the greatest complaint in Australia is usually related to shortages of relief teachers and/or the lack of finance to employ them.

CHAPTER 4

STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION

A review of the literature revealed that the relevant information concerning relief teaching was, in general, anecdotal in nature, focussing on the concerns relating to relief teaching. Evidence is lacking that valid and reliable instruments have been designed and administered to measure the range of these concerns.

Therefore, the purpose of this pilot study was to design and test an instrument which can effectively assess the views of administrators, regular and relief teachers in relation to the problems associated with relief teaching in Tasmania. At first, a questionnaire was deemed to be an appropriate instrument for the gathering of data which might subsequently be statistically analysed, in order to assist in drawing conclusions about perceptions of the problems relating to relief teaching.

Although the literature provided very little scientific evidence to support many of the claims of the authors surveyed, the propositions arising from the literature provided a basis for the construction of the questionnaire. The survey of the literature suggests the following categories of recurring problems with regard to relief teaching.

- the attitudes of school staff and administrators about the professional status and role of relief teachers;
- which factors are likely to contribute to feelings of anxiety and/or apprehension in relief teachers;
- the adequacy of relief teacher training courses which relate to such aspects of relief teaching as methods of presentation, discipline procedures, lesson plans and resource kits; and,
- how to identify factors likely to have some bearing on the effectiveness of the relief teacher.

So that comparisons could be made between different groups, the questionnaire, which was to have been circulated by post, was designed to survey the opinions of administrators, regular teachers and relief teachers. Although the questionnaire was eventually dropped, its

development is documented here because it was the foundation of the interview schedule.

QUESTIONNAIRE FORMAT

The questions were formulated in a manner designed to elicit the maximum information whilst remaining appropriate for statistical analysis. A variety of response modes were contained within the questionnaire and the reasons for their inclusion are described in the following paragraphs.

The use of the tabular response (questions 1 to 6), requires numbers, words, and phrases. This mode was identified as being the most applicable method of obtaining information relating to aspects of the respondents' personal and professional background. The resulting information will provide an opportunity to make comparisons between the different groups of people being surveyed and to determine whether professional status, gender, training and experience, and the socio-economic background of students within the schools to which they are appointed related to the attitudes of respondents.

The ranking response was used in relation to the attitudes of administrators and staff, categorising the role of the relief teacher and factors which have some bearing on relief teacher effectiveness in enhancing students' learning (questions 7, 8, 9 and 12). Respondents were given a series of statements within each question and asked to rank them in relation to a particular criterion. This response was likely to ensure that respondents would choose between alternatives, for example:

Which of the following items best describe your reason for becoming a relief teacher? Please rank in order of importance from 1 to 4 (that is, with 1 indicating the view which best coincides with yours and 4 indicating the view which least coincides).

- O a. A teaching position is not available to me at present
- O b. I enjoy the freedom of choosing when and where I work
- O c. Relief teaching allows me to fulfil family and/or other commitments
- O d. Relief teaching provides me with an opportunity to maintain my teaching skills while also allowing time to pursue other interests and/or hobbies

Other modes, such as scale or accept-reject each of the statements, would allow respondents to credit them all equally. Ranking response was likely to force respondents to be critical in their estimation of the value of each statement (Tuckman, 1978, p.208). The resulting data, when analysed, will allow comparisons to be made between the attitudes of administrators, regular teachers and relief teachers.

A scaled response was included (questions 10 and 13) so that the degree or frequency of agreement to propositions arising from the literature could be measured. Because this kind of response is "based on the assumption that a response on a scale is a quantitative measure of judgement or feeling" (Tuckman, 1978, p.204), the results should provide data which can be analysed using a parametric statistical test. Respondents were presented with descriptive statements and asked to indicate their degree of agreement by circling a number on a five point scale, for example:

"Generally relief teachers rarely receive adequate positive feedback from school staff and administrators".

strongly agree	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
strongly disagree	5

Questions 10 a, b, c, and d related to the attitudes of administrators and regular staff towards relief teachers, and in questions 13 a, b, c, d, and e, respondents were asked to indicate the need for special training for those undertaking relief teaching.

The unstructured or open-ended responses are included in conjunction with other responses (questions 7, 9, 13d). Although this form of response was likely to cause problems in quantification it gave respondents the opportunity to provide additional information.

One of the propositions arising from the literature, related to the skills needed for relief teaching and the author (Augustin, 1987, 393) makes the statement that relief teaching needs different skills and approaches, although no mention is made of any specific needs. The categorical response mode was introduced into the questionnaire to find whether or

not respondents felt the skills needed for relief teaching were different from those used by regular teachers. If the response to question 13d. was yes, respondents were asked to explain their answer. It was hoped that these explanations might hold some clues about specific skills and qualities needed for relief teaching. This in turn could assist in formulating strategies to increase relief teacher effectiveness.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

As stated previously, the questionnaire (Appendix 2) commences by requesting subjects to provide some information about their personal and professional background. Although this kind of information seems to be largely neglected by authors when undertaking research relating to this topic, it may be important because it is likely to have some bearing on the attitudes and success of relief teachers.

While education authorities throughout Australia have policies on the minimum qualifications required for undertaking this work, very little data relating to the background, gender, experience and qualifications of people working as relief teachers seem to be available (see Chapter 3). As well as using this information to correlate the subjects' background with issues relating to relief teaching, responses to these questions may provide some background information about relief teachers in Tasmania.

Researchers contend that although relief teachers are likely to be an asset in assisting schools to maintain students' educational programs, they are seldom valued as such (Shreeve et al, 1987, p.3). Others feel that administrators and regular staff do not see these people as being part of the educational process and therefore tend to ignore them rather than treat them as colleagues and educators (Drake, 1981, p.75 and Rawson, 1981, p.82).

Some relief teachers may find that they are seldom in a school for more than a few days at a time and opportunities to make contact with regular staff and receive feedback are likely to be few. Under these circumstances, these teachers may gain the impression they are viewed as suitable for brief periods of employment only and that they lack the professional status of the regular teacher (Clifton et al, 1985, p.87).

If relief teachers perceive themselves as being viewed in a negative way, they are unlikely to feel appreciated as colleagues or perform as

educators. Hence, the second section of the questionnaire seeks to discover perceptions about these teachers. In question 8, subjects are asked to rank three statements which best coincide with their overall view of the attitudes they encounter towards relief teachers. These statements are as follows: School administrators and staff see relief teachers as:

- a) Adequate to cover the absence of the regular teacher for short periods of time;
- b) Being professional educators and colleagues;
- c) Lacking in official status and experience.

Authors of the literature relating to relief teaching argue that the lack of definition of the role of these teachers creates confusion as administrators, regular and relief staff have differing expectations about what is required (Drake, 1981, p.76, Rawson, 1981, p.83 and Shreeve et al, 1987, p.315). Clarification of this role is essential if relief teachers are to provide ongoing educational activities for students, as the way in which these teachers see their role will affect their performance (Frosch, 1984, p.90).

So that information can be collected and comparisons made between groups about expectations of this role, question 9 asks respondents to rank a series of four statements, relating to the role of the relief teacher, in order of importance. The statements include:

The main role of the relief teacher is:

- a) To maintain an orderly classroom, following appropriate school and classroom procedures;
- b) To provide educationally valid activities whether or not lesson plans and information on children's abilities are available;
- c) To take over all the teaching and supervisory duties which would have been performed by the absent teacher on that day;
- d) To act as a "caretaker" and in doing so provide activities which keep students busy and interested.

Respondents are also invited to specify any other key aspects relating to the role of the relief teacher.

Question 10 asks subjects to indicate the extent to which they agree or

disagree with four problems from the literature. These problems include lack of positive feedback, low professional status, feelings of isolation and neglect, and lack of information about student learning programs and school procedures.

Researchers imply that relief teachers are hardly ever given sufficient positive feedback (Rawson, 1981, p.76 and Shreeve, 1987, p.314). This is an important aspect of relief teaching because some relief teachers rarely remain in a school long enough to assess their effect on student learning and without this feedback, these teachers cannot evaluate their performance. Hence, the quality of some relief teachers is unlikely to improve and in question 10a subjects are requested to express a degree of agreement in relation to the statement, "Generally relief teachers rarely receive adequate positive feedback from school administrators and regular staff."

Although relief teachers are qualified professionals, Rawson (1981, p.82) and Clifton et al (1985, p.67) contend that, in the United States of America, they are likely to be viewed as having a lower status than regular teachers and that their efforts are not recognised by the educational community. Consequently, self-esteem is likely to suffer. Thus, subjects are asked to indicate, in question 10b, a degree of agreement with the statement, "Relief teachers are seen by school administrators, regular staff members and students as having a low status and prestige in the educational community."

Researchers allege that administrators and regular staff tend to ignore and isolate relief teachers (Rawson, 1981, p.82, Frosch 1984, p.89 and Clifton et al, 1985, p.67). This in turn is likely to limit opportunities for relief and regular staff to make contact and discuss issues of a professional and/or social nature. To determine the perceptions of regular and relief teachers about this issue, subjects are requested to indicate a degree of agreement, to question 10c, in relation to the statement, " Relief teachers feel isolated and neglected because they lack contact with regular staff."

A major problem relating to relief teaching is lack of information about current curricula, students' abilities and problems, school routines, rules, policies and procedures. Relief teachers are likely to be expected to maintain the smooth running of the classroom while providing educationally valid and relevant activities without the above inform-

ation. The lack of this information is likely to negate the effectiveness of the relief teacher (Ford 1982, p.72, Hemmings, 1985, p.11 and Willerman et al, 1986, p.233). To discover if the provision of information is lacking, question 10d requests subjects to express a degree of agreement with the following statement, "The casual relief teacher is often a stranger at a new school and is likely to find that the provision of information on school routine, timetables, lesson plans and related material, playground procedures and supervisory duties, is often neglected by regular staff.

Clifton et al (1985, p.67) consider that very little evidence is available which suggests that there is anything positive about relief teaching and, consequently, many of these teachers are beset by anxieties and apprehensions. In fact, Johnson et al (1988, p.90) identify forty three factors which are likely to create these feelings within relief teachers. In Section 3, question 11 seeks to discover the extent of such feelings. Subjects are asked to consider a variety of factors and indicate the extent (the scale ranges from high, moderate, low to non-existent) to which they feel these factors are likely to cause apprehension or anxiety within relief teachers. The factors relate to relationships with students and school staff, professional adequacy and student achievement.

Concern has been expressed by a number of educators that students' education is being disrupted by teacher absenteeism and the subsequent ineffectiveness of the relief teacher (Drake, 1981, p.74, Meara, 1983, p.89, Shreeve et al, 1987, p.313 and Johnson et al, 1988, p.89). A number of factors including negative student attitudes, lack of information, time spent maintaining discipline, relief teacher inexperience, and teaching in an unfamiliar area, grade level or subject are thought to affect the ability of the relief teacher to move student learning forward. From a variety of such factors in question 12, section 4, subjects are asked to indicate the five main factors which negate the effectiveness of the relief teacher.

Section 5 of the questionnaire seeks subjects' opinions about the need for training for relief teaching. Hemmings (1985, p.11) blames teacher training institutions for failing to prepare their students for this work. He believes that problems are created because inexperienced teachers have difficulties coping with unexpected situations which are likely to occur during a relief assignment. Subsequently, subjects are asked, in question 13a and 13b, to indicate a degree of agreement for the

statements, "Aspects of relief teaching, such as methods of presentation, procedures for using lesson plans left by teachers and the development of resource kits and lesson plans, with activities for various classes, should be included in teacher training courses" and "Aspects of relief teaching such as the responsibilities of the relief teacher and approaches to discipline problems should be included in teacher training courses."

It is not only inexperienced teachers who may have problems as Augustin (1982, p.393) and McIntire et al (1982, p.702) allege that training for and experience as a regular classroom teacher does not always prepare teachers for relief work. They suggest that more focussed training programs can assist relief teachers to be more effective in moving students' academic learning forward. Thus, subjects are requested to indicate, in question 13d, for question their degree of agreement with the statement " Generally people wishing to work as relief teachers would benefit from orientation and training programs relating to relief teaching."

Augustin (1982, p.393) maintains that the demands of relief teaching require a different approach from those of the regular classroom because relief teachers must often provide educational activities at short notice with no information of students or their current learning programs. To discover whether it is generally believed that approaches to this work are different, question 13d requests subjects to indicate a degree of agreement with the statement, "Because relief teachers are transitory and so are likely to spend only short periods of time in a particular class, with little or no knowledge of students' abilities and problems and the current curriculum in the classroom, relief teaching requires a different approach from that used by the regular teacher."

Because Augustin has not specified what the different approaches might be, subjects are asked to indicate, in question 13e, if they consider that the skills needed for this work are different from those of the regular teacher. Subjects who answer in the affirmative are asked to explain what these skills may be.

At the end of the questionnaire, to assist in the making of recommendations, subjects are asked to make further comments about relief teaching, including the kind of assistance and information they require to teach effectively and/or what aspects of school organisation they, as relief teachers, find most useful.

PILOT TESTING

A pilot test was conducted so that questionnaire items could be reviewed and, where necessary, refined. Interviews were conducted with respondents to explain the purpose of the project and to ask them to make comments on the following aspects of the questionnaire:

- Are there any ambiguities?
- Are there any important issues which have not been included and if so what are they?
- Should any items be taken out of the questionnaire?
- Do you feel any aspects would offend school staff?
- Are all the instructions clear?
- Is the format (that is, length and/or setting out) of the questionnaire acceptable?
- Are the cover letters informative and explicit?

When respondents had completed the questionnaire and recorded any comments relating to these, a second interview was conducted to gain the maximum feedback. This information was collated and used in the evaluation of questionnaire items. Information regarding the distribution of responses can be found in Appendix 3.

EVALUATION OF AND AMENDMENTS TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE FORMAT

The responses obtained in the pilot test were used in evaluating the clarity of issues and questions, the ease with which questions would be understood and answered, and the complexity and amount of data such a survey would yield. The original plan was to trial the questionnaire with a small group and then survey a large sample of around 200. Five people were selected to participate in the trial.

Their responses elucidated some queries as to whether the preponderance of precoded questions would elicit information relating specifically to relief teaching in Tasmania. However, given that the nature of this study is exploratory, there being very little written about relief teaching in this state, it was decided that there is the need for qualitative data as well as quantitative. Therefore, changes in the format of some of the questions seemed desirable.

Some possible difficulties in the original formulation, in relation to the scope and analysis of data, were highlighted. Firstly, a large population would have to be surveyed to ensure that the study would be truly representative. Secondly, the number and type of questions contained in the initial instrument would necessitate highly complex statistical analysis for effective interpretation. Thirdly, the number of questions would require an enormous amount of time and work in their interpretation.

On further examination it was judged that the questionnaire and subsequent analysis was too biased towards the quantitative for the exploration purposes of the survey and that the study would be better served by a format allowing the collection of rich, qualitative data.

After full consideration, it was decided that the final version of this instrument would be more appropriately formulated as an interview schedule rather than a postal questionnaire and, so that a substantial amount of qualitative data might be obtained, greater use should be made of the open ended-response mode. This allows the interviewer to ask response-keyed questions and is likely to ensure that respondents will give their own opinions rather than expressing agreement with those on the questionnaire. The changed format means that the survey may be conducted with a smaller group of relief teachers.

The following briefly describes changes made to the instrument. More detailed information relating to suggestions, comments and criticisms by respondents and the changes made to the format are contained in Appendix 4.

Although respondents noted a problem with lack of specificity in instructions, in section one, they were subsequently deemed as unnecessary as interviews will be conducted by this student and the responses need only to be circled.

Because respondents had problems with the descriptors relating to the socio-economic background of their students, question 5 was altered to the open ended response mode. It was hoped that this problem has been overcome by the following:

> Please describe the socio-economic background of the students in the school/s in which you are or have been employed.

While respondents had no problems with item 7, it has been altered from a ranking to an unstructured response so that respondents will be forced to specify their particular reasons for becoming relief teachers rather than agreeing with those provided.

It was felt that the advice from respondents on options 8b and 8c, relating to relief teachers being professional educators and colleagues, and lacking in official status and experience, was valid and the three options were divided into six. The word `uncertain' has been added as option 8g so that teachers who are unsure are not forced to make a choice. To make analysis a little less complex, respondents are asked to choose the item that best coincides with their overall view rather than ranking all six.

Originally question 9 asked respondents to rank four statements in order of importance, but for the purpose of ascertaining how relief teachers see their role (rather than asking them to agree with the options) this question has been changed to "What in your opinion, is the main role of the relief teacher?"

Item 11 has been altered to an unstructured response mode so that teachers will have the opportunity to state the things that worry them most about relief teaching in anticipation that they will provide information relating specifically to their anxieties.

Item 12, in section 4, has been altered to an open-ended response so that respondents will have the opportunity to describe the main factors which they feel are most likely to negate the effectiveness of the relief teacher.

Questions 13a to 13d, relating to the training of relief teachers, remain unchanged but 13e has been deleted as it is essentially the same as the preceding question. Those who express agreement with 13d will be asked to explain their answer.

Respondents identified several issues which they felt could be included within the survey (see Appendix 3) and while these suggestions are worthwhile, it was considered that they are not appropriate to this particular study. However, one suggestion, has been included as an open-ended response (item 14) and asks teachers how, in their opinion, schools can provide information and assistance to help relief teachers

perform effectively. The responses will be valuable in drawing conclusions and making recommendations in relation to this aspect of relief teaching.

The interview schedule (Appendix 5) was trialled with two relief teachers to determine the effectiveness of the questionnaire, the time needed for answering and any difficulties arising from the change of the questionnaire to an interview schedule. No problems were apparent in relation to the understanding of questions and ease of answering and it is calculated that, on average, the interview is likely to take thirty minutes to complete.

INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this section of the study is to survey the opinions of relief teachers and determine their perceptions of: (a) the way in which school staff and administrators perceive the role of the relief teacher; (b) the factors most likely to cause anxiety and/or apprehension in relief teachers; (c) the need for training and orientation courses for teachers undertaking this work; and (d) the factors which negate the effectiveness of the relief teacher.

Hypotheses

It is hypothesised that gender, the grade levels in which a teacher works, years of teacher training, teaching experience, the socio-econonic background of the students and reasons for undertaking relief teaching are associated with the following:

- the individual's perception of the professional status and the role of relief teachers;
- the individual's perception of the relative importance of the potential anxiety factors;
- the individual's perception of the relative importance of the factors which are most likely to negate the effectiveness of the relief teacher; and
- the individual's perception of the need for special training for those people undertaking relief teaching.

Rationale for the Hypotheses

It is likely that the attitudes of administrators and regular teachers have a significant influence on the way in which relief teachers define their role and effectiveness (Rawson, 1981, Clifton et al, 1985 and Shreeve et al, 1987). Rawson (1981) and Frosch (1984) feel that, while some administrators and staff consider relief teachers as professional educators and colleagues, they treat them as "babysitters". In fact, teachers who keep classes from making excessive noise and injuring themselves are often considered to be good relief teachers (Drake 1981). These teachers may find it difficult to be part of the educational process even when they are predisposed to do so because of administrative indifference and lack of information on policies, procedures and curriculum (Hemmings, 1985 and Benedict, 1987).

Negative attitudes from administrators and regular staff may lead to feelings of neglect and isolation (Rawson, 1981 and Frosch 1984). Clifton et al (1985) have discovered that in these circumstances many relief teachers perceive themselves as having low status and prestige. Feelings of anxiety are likely to result because of a lack of job satisfaction and positive feedback.

Because of the difficulties inherent in relief teaching, McIntire et al (1982) and Augustin (1987) advocate training for relief teachers. Although not specified within the literature, they feel the skills needed for relief teaching are different from those of the ordinary classroom teacher and that relief teachers need specialised training.

Operational Definition of the Variables

The independent variables were identified as gender, professional status, years of teacher training, teaching experience, and the socio-economic background of students. These independent variables were classified as those likely to affect the dependent variable, that is, the individual's attitudes towards or perceptions of issues pertaining to relief teaching.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that this study will identify problems inherent in relief teaching in Tasmania which in turn will lead to an understanding of the factors which negate the effectiveness of and cause apprehension and or

anxiety in relief teachers. Such information could be of assistance to administrators and school staff in establishing guidelines for their expectations on the role of the relief teacher and the compilation of information which could assist in the maintainence of class routine and student learning.

METHODOLOGY FOR THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Subjects

The subjects consisted of forty teachers undertaking relief teaching in a variety of schools in the greater Hobart area. Ten male and thirty female teachers, working in schools where the socio-economic backgrounds of students range from lower through to upper and teaching in areas from infant to secondary, agreed to be interviewed. Their experience as full-time teachers ranged from 0 to 40 years, while time spent as relief teachers spanned between 6 months to 26 years. Years of training varied between 2 and 4 years.

Independent Variables

The rationale for including the independent variables, listed previously, is described below.

Gender has been included as an independent variable because educators and psychologists maintain that, between males and females, there are differences in thinking and understanding (Adams et al, 1970, p.71, Hamachek, 1977, pp. 200-201 and Chandler, 1988, p.82). Such differences may be associated with subjects' perceptions about issues relating to relief teaching.

In this study, the professional status, that is, the area or grade level in which the relief teacher works, was included because it was considered that different age groups place varied demands on teachers. Hence, there is the possibility that these factors will have some influence on attitudes.

An item asking respondents to indicate years of teacher training was incorporated because it was felt that the greater the number of years of training, the more opportunities for exposure to educational ideas thereby providing access to a broader range of teaching methods and skills. It is assumed that the acquisition of this knowledge is likely to

be an asset in facilitating the effectiveness of the relief teacher and the development of positive attitudes towards this work.

The number of years the subjects have worked as full-time and relief teachers is considered an important factor as years of teaching experience may determine levels of confidence and skills, ability to plan and implement programs of work for unfamiliar children, often at short notice, and the development and refinement of classroom management and discipline strategies. It is considered that the greater the experience, the more confident and positive attitudes will be towards relief teaching.

Informal discussions with senior staff and other relief teachers plus the personal experiences of this student suggests that the socio-economic background of students is a factor likely to be associated with the effectiveness, and therefore job satisfaction and attitudes towards relief teaching. Reasons for undertaking the work are likely to be associated with attitudes as those who only work as relief teachers because they cannot obtain a position as a regular teacher may view the work in a negative way.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable, that is, the attitudes of relief teachers towards relief teaching, was determined using checklist response (1 item), open ended response (6 items) and scaled response (9 items). The open-ended responses were subsequently categorised for the purpose of statistical analysis.

Procedure

The subjects were told that the interviews were part of a Master of Education thesis, the purpose of which is to explore attitudes to relief teaching. The subjects were assured all information would be confidential. Interviews were conducted individually, using the interview schedule developed from the pilot study. Responses were recorded by the interviewer.

DATA ANALYSIS

A chi-square test was chosen as the most suitable method of testing the hypotheses because both dependent and independent variables are nominal. Data obtained from the interviews were categorised for the

purpose of this analysis and subsequently entered into the Macintosh StatView computer program. The program was used because of its efficiency in data analysis and provision of printouts of the chi-square value with its degrees of freedom, significance level, Cramers V, the contingency coefficient, row and column totals, observed and expected frequencies, and post hoc cell contributions. The hypotheses were tested with separate chi-square tests for each of the independent variables.

CONCLUSION

Educators and researchers have speculated about the problems encountered by relief teachers and the factors which negate their effectiveness in their substitute roles but few have supported their claims with evidence obtained from the use of objective measures. Therefore, as one of the aims of this study is to assess the views of relief teachers in relation to the problems associated with relief teaching, the design of an appropriate instrument for the gathering of data is imperative.

A questionnaire, based on propositions from the literature, was constructed. These propositions have been categorised and divided into four sections which include attitudes of school staff and administrators about the status and role of relief teachers, the factors contributing to feelings of anxiety in these teachers, the need for training people undertaking relief work and the factors likely to have a bearing on their effectiveness.

Five teachers undertook the task of filling in the questionnaire and identifying any problems relating to clarity, format and suitability of items. They were interviewed before and after the completion of the task and the subsequent feedback was appraised and used in the evaluation and amendment of items. While each individual analysis was studied, it was felt some of the alterations and comments suggested were not entirely appropriate, for example the legal aspects relating to responsibility and liability if there is an accident involving a child at school. Generally this pilot study proved to be a valuable exercise in diagnosing and correcting failings.

A variety of response modes, such as tabular (questions 1 to 6), ranking (questions 7, 8, 9, and 12) scaled (questions 10 and 13), categorical

(question 13d) and unstructured (questions 7 and 9), were incorporated within the questionnaire. However, after consultation with the respondents it was felt that an interview schedule containing a greater number of questions formatted in an unstructured response mode, to be used to survey relief teachers only, would be a more appropriate instrument. Subsequently, questions 7, 9, 11, 12 and 14 were changed to this mode, allowing respondents to provide information relating specifically to Tasmania, rather than expressing agreement with propositions raised in literature from the United States of America.

Subsequent to the collection and categorisation of data obtained from the interviews, chi-square tests were performed using the Macintosh StatView program. The resulting printout provided tables which, while indicating the level of significance for correlations of dependent and independent variables, provided the means to make comparisons within and between different groups of subjects.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

In Australia and the United States of America, educators have noted a rise in the rates of teacher absenteeism which, in turn, has resulted in greater employment opportunities for relief teachers (Barcan, 1977, McIntire, 1987 and Benedict, 1987). Perhaps as a result of these absences, attention to the relationship between students' academic progress and the effectiveness of these teachers has increased. The implication within the literature is that student learning is likely to be adversely affected when the regular teacher is absent and is substituted by a relief teacher who is ineffective (Drake, 1982, Shreeve et al and 1987 Willerman, 1987).

A number of factors are identified as those most likely to affect the relief teacher's ability to move student learning forward. Some educators feel that the lack of cooperation and the negative attitudes of administrators, regular teachers and students towards relief teachers hinder their efforts to promote the smooth running of the classroom and maintain students' academic progress (Pavlich et al, 1974, Drake, 1981, Rawson, 1981, Nelson, 1984 and Tracy, 1988).

The lack of clear definition of the role of the relief teacher is likely to cause some confusion as the expectations of administrators, regular staff and relief teachers may vary (Drake, 1981, Rawson, 1981 and Frosch, 1984). The role may be be dictated by the the relief teacher's knowledge of school policies and procedures, the current curriculum within a particular classroom and knowledge of students' abilities and problems (Nelson, 1983, Gunderson 1985, Willerman et al, 1986, Augustin 1987 and Tracy, 1988).

Rawson (1981) and Clifton et al (1985) are of the opinion that relief teachers may not always receive adequate assistance and positive feedback, consequently, they are likely to feel isolated, neglected and some may perceive themselves as having low status within the educational community. These, combined with ignorance of school policies and procedures, lack of (or inadequate) lesson plans, teaching in an area outside his/her own expertise, irregularity of employment, and problems with staff and students, have been noted as some of the

factors likely to engender anxiety or apprehension within relief teachers (Johnson et al, 1988 and Tracy, 1988).

Because relief teaching is a difficult and demanding job, training programs and orientation sessions are advocated for those wishing to undertake this work (McIntire et al, 1982, Augustin, 1987 and Benedict, 1987). These training sessions appear to be rarely available in Tasmania.

From the evidence presented within the literature, it appears that no allowances are made for the effect of the variables, described in Chapter 4. In this chapter, the results of the comparisons between these variables and issues relating to relief teaching are described and illustrated by quotations and descriptions from the qualitative data.

Although there are variations in training, years of teaching experience, socio-economic backgrounds of students and reasons for undertaking the work, it is impossible to know how far this sample is representative of relief teachers in Tasmania because this is a volunteer, rather than random sample, as was explained in the methodology chapter.

However, it is possible, that as a percentage of the total number of relief teachers in Tasmania, there is representativeness in terms of gender, years of experience, qualifications and reasons for undertaking this work. Ten of the forty subjects are male and, as the Tasmanian Education Department (Chapter 3) believes that female teachers predominate (although they were unable to provide any statistics), it is possible that this twenty five percent is fairly representative.

Within the survey, six of the forty subjects were two year trained teachers and, as the Department encourages the employment of three and four year trained teachers, it is likely that these numbers would be proportionate with the population of relief teachers in the state.

The largest groups of relief teachers fall within the zero to four category for years of full-time and relief teaching experience (17 and 20 subjects respectively). Because opportunities for employment are limited, it is likely that many newly trained teachers may have to spend time as relief teachers while waiting for a position as a regular teacher.

It is possible, therefore, that the large proportion of teachers having zero

to four years of experience may be representative. It is possible that there are fewer teachers in the other groups as, from observations and personal experience, it seems likely that more experienced relief teachers are frequently offered temporary or permanent appointments in the schools in which they have worked.

While fourteen subjects indicated they enjoyed relief teaching and undertook the work for personal benefit, seventeen teachers indicated that they were unable to gain a regular position and/or needed this work to support themselves. Nine subjects indicated that the flexibility of relief teaching allowed them to fulfil personal and/or family commitments. Again it is possible that the lack of opportunities for regular employment would account for a greater percentage of teachers undertaking relief work for financial reasons and that these figures are likely to be consistent with those for the state as a whole.

GENDER DIFFERENCES

The chi-square tests show that gender differnces in relation to relief teaching are not statistically significant as each has a probability greater than the .05 level. Therefore, the hypothesis, that gender is likely to be associated with the individual's perceptions about specified issues relating to relief teaching, remains unconfirmed.

Although not of statistical significance, some of the following differences are worthy of consideration as they are likely to be socially significant. In section 2 of the interview schedule, subjects are asked about the attitudes of administrators and regular staff towards relief teachers. It is interesting to note, in Table 1, that within these two groups females (33% or 10 subjects) are more likely to feel relief teachers are seen as colleagues and educators than males (20% or 2 subjects). On the one hand, more women feel they are seen in a positive way by school staff as 60% of women (18 subjects) feel they are viewed as suitable for extended cover, educators or colleagues. On the other hand, 60% of men (6 subjects) feel they are seen as adequate for covering the classes of absent teachers for brief periods of time, lack status or are uncertain about attitudes towards them.

		GENDER		
		MALE	FEMALE	Totals
ATTITUDES	BRIEF COVER	40% (4)	23.333% (7)	27 5%
	EXTENDED COVER	20% (2)	26.667% (8)	25%
	EDUCATORS	0% (0)	10% (3)	7.5%
	COLLEAGUES	20% (2)	23.333% (7)	22 5%
	LACK STATUS	10% (1)	16.667% (5)	15%
	UNCERTAIN	10% (1)	0% (0)	2.5%
	Totals	100% (10)	100% (30)	100%

Table 1 Gender and perceived attitudes of school staff in relation to relief teachers.

Negative feelings were expressed by both male and female subjects. Seven respondents stated that it is the view of some teachers that people who undertake relief teaching are second class teachers and that relief teaching is seen as a 'nowhere job'. One teacher (female) continues:

> ***Regular teachers see relief teachers as being second rate because they can't get a teaching position but they are very critical and they expect relief teachers to consistently deliver high-powered lessons and teaching days while not realising the problems they encounter.***

Two female teachers conclude that some see relief teachers as being well-paid and do not see the need to leave any information.

> ***Some regular teachers feel relief teachers are baby sitters who are paid a lot of money... They expect the relief teacher to replace them but they leave no information on what the class is currently working on. Under these circumstances the best relief teachers can do is to provide their own educational activities which are often unrelated to the work children are doing.***

Within Table 2, it is evident that, although 57.5% of the subjects (23 respondents) agree that relief teachers are seen by students as having little or no authority, there are differences in opinion between the gender groups. In the group of males, 80% (8 subjects) agree or strongly agree and 20% (2 subjects) disagree. Two male teachers concluded that discipline could be a problem because students have negative attitudes towards relief teachers. They believe that students do not take relief teachers seriously and often behave badly.

The responses among females have a greater spread over the options as 50% (15 subjects) agree or strongly agree and 36% (11 subjects) disagree or strongly disagree (13% or 4 subjects were uncertain).

		GENDER		
		MALE	FEMALE	Totals
AUTHORITY	STRONGLY AGREE	30% (3)	23.333% (7)	25%
	AGREE	50% (5)	26.667% (8)	32.5%
	UNCERTAIN	0% (0)	13.333% (4)	10%
	DISAGREE	20% (2)	33.335% (10)	30%
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	0% (0)	3.333% (1)	2 5%
	Totals	100% (10)	100% (30)	100%

Table 2 Gender and perceptions relating to students' view that relief teachers lack authority.

It is apparent that there are some differences in opinions between males and females relating to the provision of information on school routines, lesson plans and duties. In Table 3, it can be observed that 70% of males (7 subjects) disagree that information is inadequate. The opinion of females is divided, with 52.3% (16 subjects) agreeing or strongly agreeing with 40% (12 subjects) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (the remainder are uncertain).

There is a possible link between perceptions about the adequacy of the information provided by schools and the socio-economic background of students. Of the seven male subjects who expressed disagreement with the statement, five work exclusively in schools in lower socio-economic areas and two teach in lower to middle socio-economic areas. This may indicate that these schools, more than those in other areas perceive the need to provide relief teachers with adequate information.

		GENDER		
		MALE	FEMALE	
INFORMATION	STRONGLY AGREE	10% (1)	10% (3)	10%
	AGREE	20% (2)	43.333% (13)	37.5%
	UNCERTAIN	0% (0)	6.667% (2)	5%
	DISAGREE	70% (7)	36.667% (11)	45%
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	0% (0)	3.333% (1)	2.5%
	Totals	100% (10)	100% (30)	100%

Table 3 Gender and adequacy of information provided by school staff.

Some differences are noted in how each group perceives the way school staff might render assistance which could help relief teachers teach effectively. In Table 4, it can be seen that males are evenly divided between information and behaviour strategies. While females have registered in each category, it is evident that 83% (25 subjects) in this group perceive information is important.

		GENDER		
		MALE	FEMALE	Totals
ASSISTANCE	INFORMATION	50% (5)	83.33% (25)	75%
	BEHAV. STRATEGIES	50% (5)	10% (3)	20%
	LESSON PLANS	0% (0)	3.333% (1)	2.5%
	STAFF INTRODUCTION	0% (0)	3.333% (1)	2.5%
	Totals	100% (10)	100% (30)	100%

Table 4 Gender and assistance necessary for effective relief teaching.

Although the analysis provides no evidence of significant statistical differences between these two groups, it is noteworthy that both groups express general agreement on four issues. On questions 13a and 13b, which relate to the inclusion, in initial teacher training courses, of some aspects of relief teaching such as planning and implementing lessons, responsibilities of relief teachers and discipline procedures, 82.5% (33 subjects) agree or strongly agree. For question 13d, 87.5% (35 subjects) agreed or strongly agreed that the approaches required for relief teaching differ from those of regular teaching. There is general agreement (87.5% or 35 subjects) within both groups that orientation and training courses should be provided for teachers undertaking relief teaching. This strong general agreement on these four issues continues to be the trend throughout all the tests and future comments are only recorded where there are substantial differences between groups.

Although the majority of subjects agree that issues relating to relief teaching should be included in initial teacher training courses, one male teacher with forty years of administrative and teaching experience disagrees. He argues that it would be inappropriate because generally students have no background knowledge of relief teaching and could not appreciate the issues involved. He is of the opinion that if these

issues were to be included they should be supervised by people with relief teaching experience.

GRADE LEVEL

The chi-square test shows significant differences in relation to two problems thereby suggesting that the grade level in which the relief teacher works will be associated with the individual's perceptions about the role of the relief teacher (Chi-Square = 10.017, df = 4, p = 0.0401) and the kind of assistance these people require from school staff and administrators to teach effectively (Chi-Square = 13.851, df = 6, p = 0.0313).

In regard to the role of the relief teacher, it appears that in this study, in Table 5, 78.9% of relief teachers (15 subjects) working in the primary school are likely to perceive their role as one of providing educational activities and lesson plans.

		GRADE LEVEL			
		PRIMARY	SECONDARY	ALL	Total
ROLE	WORK / DISCIPLIN	10.526 (2)	44.444% (4)	41.667% (5)	57.5%
	OWN ACTIVITIES	78.947 (15)	22.222% (2)	50% (6)	27.5%
	REGULAR TRS WORK	10.526 (2)	33.333% (3)	8.333% (1)	15%
	Total	100% (19)	100% (9)	100% (12)	100%

Table 5 Grade level and the role of the relief teacher.

From the responses to this open-ended question it is likely that most primary teachers feel their role is to plan and implement valid educational activities, provide their own resources and/or extend and develop a program already functioning in a particular classroom, keep to school routine and ensure disruption is minimised.

Those teaching in the secondary school have mixed responses but most of these teachers (44.4% or 4 subjects) are likely to see their role as one where the work of the regular teacher is continued and discipline maintained. Some secondary teachers (22.2% or 2 subjects) feel that

their role is to provide their own lesson plans but more (33.3% or 3 subjects) are likely to see the role as one which follows the lesson plans or work of the regular teacher.

Respondents working in secondary schools indicate that the specialised subject work and tightly sequential programs necessitate maintenance of discipline and the learning program. This is likely to entail keeping the class organised so that others in the school are not disturbed, following the regular teacher's planning using worksheets and textbooks, supplementing the curriculum with personal resources where that is applicable and making lessons enjoyable.

Respondents working in all areas of the school (that is Kindergarten to grade 12) are fairly evenly divided between continuing the work of the regular teacher and maintaining discipline (41.7% or 5 subjects), and providing their own activities and lesson plans (50% or 6 subjects). This group is also divided between the categories of maintaining discipline and the regular teacher's work, and providing own activities. Their ideas can be illustrated by the following quotation from one of their number.

> ***In secondary schools the relief teacher tries to continue the program and usually there are some directions and set material. In the primary school most teachers leave the class to the relief teacher. If the relief teacher doesn't know the class and the various levels within, then he or she can choose to do some revision or use his or her own resources.***

		GRADE LEVEL						
		PRIMARY		SECONDARY		ALL		Totals
ASSISTANCE	INFORMATION	94.737%	(18)	55.556%	(5)	58.333%	(7)	75%
	BEHAV. STRATS	0%	(0)	33.333%	(3)	41.667%	(5)	20%
	LESSON PLANS	0%	(0)	11.111%	(1)	0%	(0)	2.5%
	STAFF INTRO	5.263%	(1)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	2.5%
	Totals	100%	(19)	100%	(9)	100%	(12)	100%

Table 6 Grade level and assistance necessary for effective relief teaching.

It is apparent, in reviewing Table 6, that of teachers working in the primary school, 94.7% (18 subjects) are likely to perceive information to be of paramount importance in assisting relief teachers to teach effectively. In comparison, only slightly more than half of the other two groups (secondary 55.5% or 5 subjects and all 58.3% or 7 subjects) felt information was important. Of those working in the secondary school, 33.3% (3 subjects) are likely to see strategies for coping with behaviour problems as being important.

From information obtained during the interviews, it is likely that some teachers perceive that folders containing information about students, school rules and policies are a valuable asset in organising a relief day. The information which they feel should be contained within the folder for each class includes general, specialist and duty timetables, break times, school rules, severe medical problems, behaviour problems and strategies for dealing with them, a list of staff members and their status within the school, a map of the school and a seating plan for students.

Those teachers who wanted assistance with discipline and behaviour problems suggest that the relief teacher should be acquainted with the discipline system and expectations for student behaviour, regular staff should back up the relief teacher and students should be aware that if they become disruptive there will be consequences, a staff member with whom students are familiar should police behaviour two or three times during the day and there should be a member of staff available to assist with student behaviour problems.

It is considered by subjects that any lesson plans left for the relief teacher should be clear and well set out and that the teacher should be introduced to a regular staff member who can assist with any problems that might arise in a specific subject area.

Although not statistically significant, there are some interesting trends in relation to the effect of the grade level, in which the teacher works, on attitudes and effectiveness. It can be observed, in Table 7, that none of the 21 teachers (52% of the sample) who work in secondary and all areas of the school perceive that school staff see them as educators. In fact, it would appear that these people feel they are viewed in a negative way as 55.5% of secondary teachers (5 subjects) and 50% of those teaching in all areas (6 subjects) responded to being seen as suitable for brief cover or lacking in status. In comparison, 68% of

		GRADE LEVEL						Totals
		PRIMARY		SECONDARY		ALL		
ATTITUDES	BRIEF COVER	15.789%	(3)	33.333%	(3)	41.667%	(5)	27.5%
	EXTENDED COVER	31.579%	(6)	33.333%	(3)	8.333%	(1)	25%
	EDUCATORS	15.789%	(3)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	7.5%
	COLLEAGUES	21.053%	(4)	11.111%	(1)	33.333%	(4)	22.5%
	LACK STATUS	15.789%	(3)	22.222%	(2)	8.333%	(1)	15%
	UNCERTAIN	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	8.333%	(1)	2.5%
	Totals	100	(19)	100%	(9)	100%	(12)	100%

Table 7 Grade level and perceived attitudes of school staff in relation to relief teachers.

primary teachers (13 subjects) feel they are seen as educators or colleagues, or adequate to cover the classes of absent teachers for extended periods of time.

		GRADE LEVEL						Totals
		PRIMARY		SECONDARY		ALL		
EFFECTIVENESS	STUDENT PROBLEMS	68.421%	(13)	33.333%	(3)	50%	(6)	55%
	LACK OF INFORMAT'N	26.316%	(5)	22.222%	(2)	25%	(3)	25%
	STAFF PROBLEMS	5.263%	(1)	22.222%	(2)	8.333%	(1)	10%
	OTHER	0%	(0)	11.111%	(1)	8.333%	(1)	5%
	NONE	0%	(0)	11.111%	(1)	8.333%	(1)	5%
	Totals	100%	(19)	100%	(9)	100%	(12)	100%

Table 8 Grade level and factors negating the effectiveness of relief teachers.

In relation to the effect of Grade Level on the factors most likely to negate the effectiveness of the relief teacher, certain inferences can be made from Table 8. It appears that the majority of these primary teachers (68.4% or 13 subjects) and half of those who teach in all areas see problems with students as the most likely factor in negating their effectiveness. While secondary teachers agree, their responses are more evenly divided, that is, 3 subjects (33.3%) opt for student problems, 2 subjects (22.2%) for lack of information and 2 subjects (22.2%) for staff problems.

Responses to this open-ended question about factors negating the effect of the relief teacher include inadequate lesson plans, negative attitudes and bad behaviour of students, lack of support and assistance from staff, lack of information about school rules and routine, time spent dealing with disruptive students, students who are unexpectedly faced with a relief teacher, inability to locate materials for the day, no time to develop rapport, teaching unfamiliar students, inability to follow up work and lack of information on students' abilities.

While there is general agreement (87.5% or 35 subjects) that relief teaching requires a different approach from that used by the regular teacher, there is a wide spread of responses as to what constitutes a different approach. Although secondary teachers felt approaches to maintaining control and keeping discipline are different, 33.3% of these people (3 subjects), 36.8% of primary teachers (7 subjects) and 41.6% of teachers who work in all areas (5 subjects) came in the 'other' category.

This category included miscellaneous items which did not fit any one category and includes such aspects as personal skills (that is adaptability, flexibility and resourcefulness), inability to think what the approaches might be even though agreeing that they are different, the relief teacher having to assess the class and decide whether she/he will be able to get work done or will babysit, having to prepare a greater number of activities for the day than the regular teacher and trying to plan interesting and challenging activities so that children will have a positive attitude towards the relief teacher.

Overall, diverse approaches were suggested, such as planning activities that can be finished in a day, implementing discipline strategies quickly and efficiently so that control can be maintained, the need to develop a good rapport with children in a short space of time, planning activities for a whole class rather than groups. One male teacher who works in all areas of the school agrees that relief work is unlike regular teaching but there is no solution because children alienate the relief teacher straight away.

The relief teachers in this sample seem to be of the opinion that lack of time and being called at short notice create or exacerbate problems. As one secondary teacher observes:

> ***Because you are only there for a short space of time you cannot leave things, like behaviour problems, to be dealt with by other people. You have to react more quickly to discipline problems and be more sensitive***

to learning problems and personality clashes between students. It's like being with a class on the first day of school every time you have a relief day.

Further comments were made about the difficulties in facing unfamiliar children.

A primary teacher concludes:

The relief teacher ... must decide quickly ... what classroom management techniques are likely to be suitable for a particular class and how to gain the respect of children without knowing their history. A relief teacher must be well-prepared for a days' work.

TRAINING

The hypothesis predicting that training would be associated with the individual's perceptions about issues relating to relief teaching remains unconfirmed as the chi-square tests are not statistically significant.

A review of contingency tables provides some information on differences between the groups in this study. Although responses are spread over most categories relating to the attitudes of regular staff and administrators (Table 9), it is interesting to note, of the twenty five subjects who were part of the four year trained sample, none feel they are considered as educators. While it is not as significant, as there are only six subjects, the two year trained teachers do not perceive that they are seen by school staff as colleagues. Two-thirds of two and three year trained teachers appear to feel they are viewed by school staff in a positive way, that is, they are adequate for extended cover, educators or colleagues while only half the four year trained teachers have similar perceptions.

		YEARS OF TRAINING						
		TWO YR		THREE YR.		FOUR YR.		Totals
ATTITUDES	BRIEF COVER	16.667%	(1)	22.222%	(2)	32%	(8)	27.5%
	EXTENDED COVER	33.333%	(2)	22.222%	(2)	24%	(6)	25%
	EDUCATORS	33.333%	(2)	11.111%	(1)	0%	(0)	7.5%
	COLLEAGUES	0%	(0)	33.333%	(3)	24%	(6)	22.5%
	LACK STATUS	16.667%	(1)	11.111%	(1)	16%	(4)	15%
	UNCERTAIN	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	4%	(1)	2.5%
	Totals	100%	(6)	100%	(9)	100%	(25)	100%

Table 9 Years of training and perceived attitudes of school staff in relation to relief teachers.

Some differences in the perceived role of the relief teacher are apparent.

Within this sample it appears that two (83.3% or 5 subjects) and three year trained (77.7% or 7 subjects) people are more likely to see the role of the relief teacher as one involving the preparation and provision of educational activities. There is a more even spread of responses for four year trained teachers, with 36% (9 subjects) continuing the work of the regular teacher and maintaining discipline, 44% (11 subjects) providing their own activities and 20% (5 subjects) taking over the work of the regular teacher.

The open-ended question 11 in the interview schedule, which asks respondents to indicate the things that worry them most about relief teaching, produced a miscellany of responses. Some of these are categorised as 'other' because they do not fall into any particular category. While responses to this question are generally spread across all categories (including problems with students and staff and lack of information), two and four year trained teachers feel problems with students are the greatest worry, and the majority of three year trained subjects were included in the 'other' category. While the majority of teachers had some worries about relief teaching, 15% of teachers (6 subjects) claimed to have no worries.

Although there were no great differences between groups, the responses to this question provide an insight into factors likely to cause some stress or apprehension among relief teachers and include lack of information on school policies and procedures, irregularity of employment, lack of feedback, lack of lesson plans and resources, liability in the case of accidents involving students, insufficient backup from regular staff on discipline problems, no access to professional development, negative student attitudes, unavailability of timetables and registers, expectations that the relief teacher will be a 'star performer' every day, bad behaviour of students and keeping discipline.

YEARS OF FULL-TIME EXPERIENCE

One chi-square test gave statistically significant results (Chi Square= 23.752, df= 12, p = .022) indicating that the number of years of full-time experience will be associated with teachers' perceptions about student attitudes regarding the authority of relief teachers.

In Table 10 it can be observed that 58.7% of zero to four (10 subjects), 71.4% of the five to nine (10 subjects), 40% of the ten to fourteen (2

subjects) and 25% of the fifteen plus years of experience group (1 subject) agree or strongly agree with the proposition that relief teachers lack standing in the eyes of students. Therefore, it is likely that those with less experience are more inclined to believe that students see relief teachers as having little or no authority.

		YEARS OF EXPERIENCE								
		ZERO-FOUR		FIVE-NINE		TEN-FOURTEEN		FIFTEEN +		Totals
AUTHORITY	STONGLY AGREE	11.765%	(2)	50%	(7)	20%	(1)	0%	(0)	25%
	AGREE	47.059%	(8)	21.429%	(3)	20%	(1)	25%	(1)	32.5%
	UNCERTAIN	11.765%	(2)	0%	(0)	40%	(2)	0%	(0)	10%
	DISAGREE	29.412%	(5)	28.571%	(4)	20%	(1)	50%	(2)	30%
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	25%	(1)	2.5%
	Totals	100%	(17)	100%	(14)	100%	(5)	100%	(4)	100%

Table 10 Years of teaching experience and perceptions of students' views that relief teachers lack authority.

While not statistically significant, over half the respondents (57% or 23 subjects) are of the opinion that the role of the relief teacher is to provide their own educational activities. In comparing the figures, it appears that the more experienced the teacher the more likely he/she is to take on this kind of role. Of the zero to four group, 41.1% (7 subjects) come into this category, 64.2% for the five to nine group (9 subjects) and 80% and 75% for the ten to fourteen and fifteen plus groups (4 and 3 subjects respectively).

Albeit 60% of teachers (24 subjects) agree or strongly agree that relief teachers rarely receive adequate positive feedback, the trend is for the less experienced to be in agreement, that is 58.1% of zero to four (10 subjects) and 78.5 % of five to nine years (10 subjects) agree. The ten to fourteen year group are evenly divided between agree and disagree and the fifteen plus group register only 1 subject (25%) in agreement while 3 subjects in this group (75%) disagree.

Opinion appears to be divided on whether relief teachers feel isolated and neglected because they lack contact with school administrators and

regular staff (42.5% or 17 subjects agree or strongly agree and 47.5% or 18 subjects disagree or strongly disagree). The trend again is for the less experienced, that is, the zero to four and five to nine groups to have a greater spread of responses across all options. The more experienced teachers expressed disagreement or strong disagreement with this statement (ten to four 80% or 4 subjects and fifteen plus 75% or 3 subjects).

Although this was not an open-ended question, two people, each with thirty two years of experience, agree that relief teachers can feel isolated. One of the subjects believes that this can happen if the relief teacher is not well-known in a school while the other considers the relief teacher should make an effort to come in contact with staff members.

In relation to worries about relief teaching, the zero to four year group seem to have a greater variety of these as their responses are spread across all categories. The other three more experienced groups register only in the problems with students and lack of information categories. The biggest worry for all groups seems to be problems with students.

A subject (40 years full-time administrative and teaching experience) made the observation that lack of information and problems with students combined with the legal liability of relief teachers is worrying. In his experience, there have been situations where a relief teacher could not possibly cope with totally unpredictable and potentially explosive situations involving students with extreme behaviour problems. He is worried that relief teachers may be held responsible in the event of difficulties arising from these situations even though they have not been informed by the school that there is a potential problem.

When making comparisons between groups in the kinds of approaches they feel are needed for relief teaching, it was apparent that a greater number of the less experienced zero to four group (47% or 8 subjects) surmise that discipline strategies are part of the different approaches used in relief teaching. Their general supposition is that the relief teacher needs to be stricter than the regular teacher.

> ***Because relief teaching is short term, behavioural management is important and the relief teacher must decide very quickly how to get children under control. Be very firm and get rid of the troublemakers out of the class. (Relief teacher, zero to four years experience)***

The ten to fourteen group is evenly divided on their approaches between using activities suited to the whole class and the 'other' category. In five to nine and fifteen plus groups, 50% of each group (a total of 7) subjects falls within the 'other' category.

The more experienced groups believe that the short term nature of relief teaching means that the relief teacher must be able to plan activities that can be finished in a day or two. Because these teachers are working with children who don't know them they must develop some 'showmanship' to hold their interest.

A relief teacher with forty years of full-time experience states that relief teaching is a difficult and demanding job. He concludes:

> ***Some activities planned by relief teachers presuppose certain learning habits, therefore they must adjust approaches to accommodate the skills and aptitudes within a particular class. These teachers should concentrate on what will be of interest to children rather than subjects. Relief teachers are in a position of risk and therefore the nature of the activities they undertake with students may be restricted with consideration given to the problems of control and discipline.***

It appears that 75% of teachers (30 subjects) consider that information is necessary if relief staff are to teach effectively. The responses of the zero to four and five to nine groups are more varied than the other two but it seems likely that as experience increases so does the percentage of people who consider information an asset as 70.5% of zero to four (12 subjects), 71.4 % of five to nine (10 subjects), 80% of ten to fourteen (4 subjects) and 100% of the fifteen plus groups (4 subjects) come into this category.

Unfamiliarity and lack of information are likely to create problems, but two subjects (32 years full-time and relief teaching experience) are of the opinion that while information is important, relief teachers who associate with a small number of schools will do a better job. One of the teachers comments that "continuity in a school is a great help. You get to know the school and the children and it's better as far as discipline is concerned.".

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF STUDENTS

Despite the fact that none of the test results in this section were statistically significant, some interesting comparisons can made between groups from observations of the contingency tables.

Generally subjects agree that students perceive relief teachers as having little or no authority as 57.5% (23 subjects) agree or strongly agree and 32.5% (13 subjects) disagree or strongly disagree (10% or 4 subjects are uncertain). It is interesting to note, that of teachers who work in schools where the socio-economic background of students is low, 83.3% (5 subjects) agree or strongly agree in comparison with percentages of 52.4% for lower-middle (6 subjects), 40% for middle (2 subjects) and 58.7% for those who teach in all areas (10 subjects).

Percentages for the sample as a whole are evenly divided on the question as to whether schools provide sufficient information about school policies, procedures and duties. While other groups are divided in their agreement, it is noteworthy that 83.3% of teachers (5 subjects) working in lower socio-economic areas disagree that information is inadequate.

Further differences between the lower group and the rest of the sample are apparent in relation to the kinds of assistance they feel schools should provide. While the majority in each group want information, the lower group are evenly divided between information and behaviour strategies.

In the area of discipline, one interviewee working in a lower socio-economic area concludes that "the relief teacher should be made aware of the rules operating within the school and the strategies for discipline...schools need to provide a system of support in this area."

Another teacher working in this area feels that folders containing information on school and class procedures are important. After an experience with a "psychopathic" student, he is convinced that relief teachers should be given information about students who have severe behaviour problems and strategies for coping with them. He is of the opinion that the relief teacher and students are likely to be put at risk without this knowledge and assistance from regular staff.

YEARS OF RELIEF TEACHING EXPERIENCE

In the analysis of the effect of years of relief teaching experience on issues relating to relief teaching, two tests proved to be statistically significant. The hypothesis that years of relief teaching experience will be associated with teachers' perceptions about the need for orientation

and training for relief work was highly significant (Chi-Square = 22.599, df = 9, p = 0.0072).

		YEARS OF RELIEF TEACHING EXPERIENCE								
		ZERO-FOUR		FIVE-NINE		TEN-FOURT'N		FIFTEEN+		Totals
ORIENTATION	STRONGLY AGREE	5	(7)	3	(2.8)	5	(2.1)	1	(2.1)	14
	AGREE	14	(10.5)	2	(4.2)	1	(3.15)	4	(3.15)	21
	DISAGREE	1	(2)	3	(1.8)	0	(0.6)	0	(0.6)	4
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	0	(0.5)	0	(1.2)	0	(0.15)	1	(0.15)	1
	Totals	20		8		6		6		40

Table 11 Relief teaching experience and the need for orientation and training programs.

There is general agreement (87.5% or 35 subjects) within the sample that orientation and training sessions would benefit those wishing to undertake relief teaching. As the observed are greater than the expected frequencies (Table 11), it is likely that those with zero to four and ten to fourteen years teaching experience are most likely to see orientation and training as beneficial for relief teachers.

		YEARS OF RELIEF TEACHING EXPERIENCE								
		ZERO-FOUR		FIVE-NINE		TEN-FOURT'N		FIFTEEN+		Totals
AUTHORITY	STRONGLY AGREE	25%	(5)	12.5%	(1)	50%	(3)	16.66%	(1)	25%
	AGREE	40%	(8)	50%	(4)	16.66%	(1)	0%	(0)	32.55
	UNCERTAIN	0%	(0)	25%	(2)	16.66%	(1)	16.66%	(1)	10%
	DISAGREE	35%	(7)	12.5%	(1)	0%	(0)	66.66%	(4)	30%
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	16.66%	(1)	0%	(0)	2.5%
	Totals	100%	(20)	100%	(8)	100%	(6)	100%	(6)	1005

Table 12 Years of relief teaching experience and perceptions relating to students' views that relief teachers lack authority.

The hypothesis that years of relief teaching experience will be associated with attitudes relating to students' perceptions about the

relief teachers lack of authority was confirmed (Chi-Square = 21.152, df = 12, p = 0.0482). It can be observed that, in Table 12, while the majority within the goups of zero to four years (65% or 13 subjects), five to nine years (62.5% or 5 subjects) and ten to fourteen year groups (66.6% or 4 subjects) agree or strongly agree that students perceive relief teachers to be lacking in authority, the majority of the fifteen plus group disagrees (66.6% or 4 subjects).

		YRS. OF RELIEF TR. EXPERIENCE								
		ZERO-FOUR		FIVE-NINE		TEN-FOURT'N		FIFTEEN+		Totals
EFFECTIVENESS	STUDENT PROGRESS	40%	(8)	50%	(4)	83.33%	(5)	83.33%	(5)	55%
	LACK OF INFORM'N	25%	(5)	37.5%	(3)	16.66%	(1)	16.66%	(1)	25%
	STAFF PROBLEMS	20%	(4)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	10%
	OTHER	5%	(1)	12.5%	(1)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	5%
	NONE	10%	(2)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	5%
	Totals	100%	(20)	100%	(8)	100%	(6)	100%	(6)	100%

Table 13 Years of relief teaching experience and factors negating relief teacher effectiveness.

In making comparisons between groups in relation to the effect of years of experience and effectiveness (Table 13), it appears that the less experienced groups, that is the zero to four and five to nine, see a greater range of factors responsible for negating the effectiveness of the relief teacher than those in the ten to fourteen and fifteen plus groups. In fact all the responses for the latter groups fall into the student problems (83.3% or a total of 10 subjects between both groups) and lack of information categories (16.6% or 2 subjects in both groups).

REASONS FOR UNDERTAKING RELIEF TEACHING

There were no results of statistical significance from the chi-square tests comparing the reasons people undertake relief teaching with issues relating to this work. However, in the comparisons between reasons for undertaking this work and perceptions about the attitudes of administrators and regular staff, the majority of those who undertake the work for personal benefit (71.1% or 10 subjects) or financial reasons (66% or

4 subjects) feel they are viewed as suitable for extended cover, educators or colleagues.

Those who choose this work because it allows time to fulfil other commitments are evenly divided between being seen as lacking in status or suitable for brief cover and suitable for extended cover, colleagues or educators. It is noteworthy that those who undertake this work because they are unable to gain a regular teaching position appear to feel they are seen in a negative light as 63.5% (7 subjects) fall into the categories of being suitable for brief cover or lacking in status.

Although the majority of the sample (60% or 24 subjects) agree or strongly agree that the feedback provided by administrators and regular staff is inadequate, a greater number of the people within the group who are unable to obtain a regular position agree (81% or 9 subjects) or strongly agree. In comparison only 64% of those in the personal benefit (9 subjects), 33.3% in commitments (3 subjects) and 49% in finance groups (3 subjects) agree or strongly agree.

CONCLUSIONS

The literature portrays the attitudes of administrators and regular staff as being strongly negative towards relief teachers (Rawson, 1981, Clifton et al, 1985 and Shreeve et al, 1987). In making comparisons between groups in the study, it can be observed however that not all relief teachers conclude they are viewed negatively. When reviewing gender differences in relation to attitudes, 60% of females (24 subjects), on the one hand, perceive they are viewed positively. On the other hand, 60% of males (6 subjects) feel they are seen as suitable for brief cover, lacking in official staus or uncertain.

While it is not possible to draw conclusions from these results, it could be speculated that cultural expectations may cause some men to feel they should have regular or permanent work. As relief teaching is neither of these, negative feelings may be induced in males who undertake this work.

In the interaction between attitudes and the grade level in which a teacher works, 68% of primary teachers (13 subjects) see themselves as being viewed in a positive light, that is, suitable for extended cover, educators or colleagues. The majority of subjects in the other two groups feel they are seen as suitable for brief cover or lacking in status.

Although these results are not conclusive, it might be surmised that relief teachers are seen to, or believe they, minimise disruptions caused by doubling up classes or using the principal as a relief teacher. This may lead them to feel they are viewed more positively.

Negative student attitudes and perceptions that the relief teacher lacks the authority of the regular teacher have been cited as a major factor, by researchers, in negating the effectiveness of relief teachers (Pavlich, 1974, Drake 1981, Nelson, 1984 and Benedict, 1987). The interaction between this issue and years of full-time and relief teacher experience proved to be statistically significant. From observations of percentages within groups, it is likely that those with less teaching experience are more likely to feel that students perceive relief teachers to be lacking in authority.

Because these results are statistically significant, it could be suggested that inexperienced teachers may not be able to recognise potential difficulties and/or have developed strategies for handling them. It is likely that students take advantage of this fact. They may then become less well-behaved than usual, leading such teachers to feel that students see relief teachers in general as lacking in authority.

The comparisons between students' perceptions about the authority of relief teachers and the socio-economic backgrounds of students, while not statistically significant, are noteworthy. Within the sample, it is observed that those working in lower socio-economic areas are more inclined to agree or strongly agree that students see relief teachers as having little or no authority.

Discussions with senior staff in these schools confirms that behaviour in these schools is often less than ideal when a relief teacher is substituted for the regular teacher. It is likely that the break in the relationship with their teacher causes some of these students to become resentful and insecure, and lack of cooperation and behaviour problems often result.

Researchers and educators in the United States of America (Drake, 1981, Rawson, 1981 and Frosch, 1984) are of the opinion that there is some confusion among school staff and relief teachers about the role of the relief teacher. Some of the problems may be related to the demands of particular grade levels as three definitions have emerged from the examination of the qualitative data.

There are statistically significant differences in relation to the influence of grade level on the perceived role of the relief teacher. The percentages within the contingency tables indicate that the majority of primary teachers (78.9% or 15 subjects) are likely to provide their own activities and resources, more secondary teachers (44.4% or 4 subjects) will undertake the role of maintaining discipline and the smooth running of the class, and continuing and supplementing the regular teacher's planning. Those teaching from kindergarten to grade 12 are divided between maintaining discipline and continuing the work of the regular teacher (41.7% or 5 subjects) and providing their own activities (50% or 6 subjects).

It could be conjectured that these differences occur because secondary programs are tightly sequential and generally demand a higher degree of knowledge and expertise than those in the primary school. Therefore, it is to students' advantage that relief teachers continue the programs.

Researchers (Rawson, 1981, Nelson, 1983, Willerman et al, 1986, Clifton et al, 1985, Augustin, 1987 and Tracy, 1988) believe that the relief teacher's lack of knowledge of school policies and procedures, curricula, and students' abilities and problems to be a major factor in negating his/her ability to continue student learning programs. It is thought schools may contribute to the problem because they fail to provide their relief teachers with this information.

Subjects are divided in their opinion as to whether schools provide sufficient information. Percentages for the sample as a whole denote that 47% (18 subjects) agree or strongly agree that the provision of this information is generally inadequate and 48.6% (19 subjects) disagree or strongly disagree. Although, discussions with colleagues reveal that the provision of information is improving, these figures suggest that some schools have not made adequate provisions in this area.

Some educators (Rawson, 1981 and Clifton et al, 1985) perceive lack of communication and positive feedback are likely to cause relief teachers to feel isolated and neglected because they lack contact with administrators or regular staff. On this aspect of relief teaching, the opinion of subjects is divided. The percentages for the sample as a whole show that 42.5% (17 subjects) agree or strongly agree and 47.5% (19 subjects) disagree or strongly disagree. The trend is for the less experienced groups, that is those with zero to four and five to nine years full-time experience, to agree or strongly agree.

It is possible that more experienced teachers tend to work in the same schools where they are known and accepted by school staff. This is likely to allow opportunities for discussions about successes and problems. Some teachers may not be unduly concerned about the lack of feedback because they are confident in their ability to cope with the work.

Some researchers (Drake 1981, Rawson, 1981, Clifton, et al, 1985 and Shreeve et al, 1987) believe that relief teachers are seen by school administrators and regular teachers as having low status and prestige within the educational community. Although there are no substantial differences between groups, the opinion of subjects is divided as 57.4% (23 subjects) agree or strongly disagree, 35% (14 subjects) disagree and 7.6% (3 subjects) are uncertain.

On the one hand, this result might be attributable to the negative attitudes of relief teachers who perceive they are seen in a negative way or view the work as less than ideal. On the other hand, opportunities to talk with school staff, either socially or professionally, at break times are often limited, leaving some subjects feeling neglected and lonely.

Within the literature (Hartshorne, 1981, Clifton, et al, 1985, Johnson, 1988 and Tracy, 1988) such factors, as lack of knowledge of school policies and procedures, teaching in an unfamiliar area, irregularity of employment, are thought to produce feelings of anxiety and apprehension in relief teachers. The question asking subjects to name their main worries about relief teaching produced a wide variety of answers. In making comparisons between groups in relation to years of full-time experience and anxieties, it is apparent that the less experienced teachers within this sample collectively have a greater variety of worries. Those with five plus years of experience see lack of information and problems with students as their biggest worry.

While the results could not be considered conclusive, this leads to speculation that more-experienced teachers are likely to have developed strategies for coping with most problems. Less-experienced teachers, who may be not be familiar with a variety of schools, may find the differing school policies, rules and needs of students confusing.

Educators, concerned about the effectiveness of relief teachers (McIntire, 1982, Augustin, 1987 and Benedict, 1987), have advocated

that student and relief teachers should have access to training and orientation programs specifically related to relief teaching. There is strong general agreement for such programs as the results for the test on the effect of years of relief teaching experience on the need for orientation and training programs is statistically significant. From this, it can be observed that it is those with the least experience who see the greatest need for these programs.

This may indicate that inexperienced teachers may lack confidence and feel the need to continue the development of the skills and strategies which will enable them to teach effectively. It is possible that more-experienced teachers have developed skills through their participation in the work. It might also be conjectured that inexperienced relief teachers are more likely to feel the need for training programs than those who are in regular teaching positions. This may be due, in part, to the irregularity of employment and transient nature of relief teaching.

While regular teachers have access to professional development activities and the opportunity to work with the same class for extended periods of time, relief teachers may lack these opportunities. Added to this they are often lack knowledge of curricula and procedures and discipline stategies for a particular classroom, and may be faced with students who refuse to cooperate. The brevity of relief assignments may mean that the relief teacher does not have time to develop strategies which will work in a particular classroom. Therefore, it is not surprising that some of these teachers may lack confidence and feel the need for some kind of support in the form of training and orientation.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Education authorities in both the United States of America and Australia support the employment of relief teachers to cover the classes of absent teachers. However, evidence from a variety of sources indicates that attitudes towards relief teachers are likely to differ between these two countries.

The literature written by educators and researchers in the United States of America is frequently negative, that is, the educational community is likely to perceive relief teachers as being ineffective in moving student learning forward and as not being accepted as colleagues and educators by regular staff and administrators.

Evidence obtained in relation to relief teaching in Australia discloses that these teachers are likely to be seen in a more positive way. While some problems have been documented (see Chapters 2 and 3), it is likely that relief teachers are seen as a valuable resource, facilitating schools' ability to minimise interruptions and continue students' learning programs. But, while on the surface attitudes towards these teachers appear to be positive, the survey raises some queries about underlying problems relating to the the role relief teachers are likely to undertake and their subsequent effectiveness.

Although these teachers are a potentially valuable resource, the maintenance of student learning programs is likely to be put at risk by the lack of definition of the role of the relief teacher. Data from the survey indicate that relief teachers themselves have differing ideas about this role. Because of the lack of clear, realistic directives about their function, throughout all levels of educational administration, it is likely that the results of their work do not always meet the expectations of regular staff. Hence, some of these teachers may be rendered or be seen as ineffective.

From responses to the interview, it seems that the circumstances of absences, that is whether planned or unplanned, socio-economic background of students and the expertise of a teacher in a particular subject or grade level, may dictate the role. In this situation, it is possible that policies relating to relief teaching must encompass a number of circumstances and a single definition may not be practicable.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the results of analysis of responses from the interview schedule. Comparisons are to be made between these results and the claims made by authors of the literature, information from Tasmanian Education Department files, interviews with former teachers, and correspondence with education departments and teacher unions in Australia. The collated material is used to provide a basis for making conclusions and recommendations relating to relief teaching.

COMPARISONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Perceived Attitudes of Administrators and Staff

Increased leave provisions in both Australia and the United States of America have occasioned greater employment opportunities for relief teachers (see Chapter 1). In fact, at times, in Tasmania, schools have been hard pressed to continue educational programs in schools and professional development seminars for teachers because of the unavailability of relief teachers. Information contained within Tasmanian Education Department files and interviews with retired teachers indicates that students and schools sustain fewer interruptions to school routine and student learning when relief teachers are utilised (see Chapter 2).

Therefore, it seems that relief teachers should be treated as trained, professional educators who are employed for the purpose of maintaining learning programs and minimising disruption to school routines but some researchers and educators in the United States of America (Drake, 1981, p.75, Rawson, 1981, p.82, Frosch, 1984, Clifton et al, 1985 p. 67, p.89 and Shreeve et al, 1987, p.3) believe that many administrators and staff do not see them as such.

In contrast, information obtained from the survey indicates that a small majority of people consider they are viewed in a positive light. It is interesting to note that while 46% (18 subjects) felt they were seen as either suitable for extended cover or as colleagues, only 7% (3 subjects) believe they are seen as educators. The latter may be due to the fact that many relief assignments are short term and it is not possible for relief teachers to feel or to be seen as having an effect on student learning.

Further differences were found within the sample, indicating that primary teachers are more likely to believe that they are viewed in a positive manner, that is, being suitable for extended cover, educators and colleagues. This may come about because of the problems Tasmanian

primary schools are likely to encounter. In the past, when teachers were absent, classes were doubled up or taken by the principal (see Chapter 2). As it is unlikely that teachers in the primary school will be free for supervision, relief teachers are likely to be seen as an asset in minimising disturbances, not only in the class of the absent teacher but in the school as a whole.

On a short term basis, secondary schools in Tasmania (see Chapter 3) are likely to have fewer problems as teachers with non-contact time can be used to take the classes of absent teachers. These teachers have the advantage of knowing school policies and routines and, because students know they are part of the school, discipline may be maintained with greater ease.

Added to this, the curriculum content in the secondary school is likely to demand a higher degree of specialisation and expertise than that of the primary school. This in turn is likely to mean that the introduction of relief teachers is likely to mean extra work in familiarising them with the school and in the provision of lesson plans and information. Consequently, these teachers may not be valued in quite the same manner as those in the primary school.

The comparison between males and females reveals that women in the sample were more likely to feel they are viewed positively. While sociological reasons may account for such differences (see Chapter 5), there is also the possibility that these perceptions are linked to the grade level in which a teacher works. In this sample, a higher percentage of women than men work in the primary school. This may account for apparent gender differences as those who work in this area generally feel they are viewed in a positive way.

The reasons for undertaking relief teaching appear to have some bearing on subjects' perceptions about attitudes towards them. While those who undertake this work for personal or financial reasons believe they are seen positively, those who undertake the work to allow the fulfilment of personal and family commitments are evenly divided, but teachers who engage in relief work because they are unable to obtain a regular position consider they are viewed in a negative way. It may be that their frustration and/or disappointment at being unable to obtain a position affects their perceptions about the attitudes of regular staff and administrators.

Some points of interest can be noted when years of teacher training is correlated with the perceived attitudes of regular staff and adminstrators.

Four year trained subjects do not believe they are considered as educators while two year trained people do not consider they are seen as colleagues.

It is possible that the problems inherent in relief teaching contribute to the belief that relief teachers are viewed as lacking in status as educators and colleagues. People having trained for four years to be professional educators are likely to become disillusioned because the nature of relief teaching is likely to mean that they are never around to observe the results of their teaching, therefore, job satisfaction may be severely limited. Combine this with a lack of contact with regular teachers and administrators (see Chapter 1) and it is not surprising these teachers feel they are not valued as professional educators.

Although the minimum training for relief teaching in Tasmania (Chapter 3) is three years, some two year trained people are still employed. It is notable that these people do not believe they are seen as colleagues. It is possible that having fewer years of training they feel they are not as well-qualifed as four year trained people and this, in turn, may influence perceptions about the attitudes of regular staff.

The literature relating to relief teaching suggests that relief teachers rarely receive adequate positive feedback from administrators and staff (Drake, 1981, p.76, Rawson 1981, p.83 and Clifton et al, 1985, p.67). Responses from interviews indicate that the majority of those surveyed (60% or 24 subjects) agree, but it is noteworthy that many of those who did so were less experienced teachers. Those who have been teaching for fifteen or more years generally disagreed. It is likely that more experienced teachers have become well known to administrators and regular staff, especially if they work regularly in a few schools. This would allow opportunities for the relief teacher to make contact socially and professionally.

Role

Throughout Australia (see Chapter 2), the role of relief teachers is likely to vary according to the circumstances of absences and, depending on the training and skills of these people, at times, they may undertake such duties as planning and implementing lessons, bus and yard duty, report writing, student/parent meetings and marking work set by the regular teacher.

Information obtained from the interview schedule indicates that relief teachers' perceptions about the role are likely to vary. However, it appears that the area, that is, primary or secondary, in which a teacher works has

some bearing on how he/she defines that role. Primary teachers (15 subjects or 78%) are likely to see the job as one where they provide their own educational activities and resources. While some secondary teachers agree (2 subjects or 22.2%), the majority of subjects (7 subjects or 77.8%) are likely to consider that they should continue the work of the regular teacher, supplementing it where applicable and maintaining discipline so that interruptions to school routine as a whole are minimised.

While Rawson (1981, p.82) is of the opinion that the expectations of school staff and relief teachers, in the United States of America, often conflict, in this case it is likely that the demands of the curriculum in Tasmanian primary and secondary schools account for the difference in responses. In the experience of this student, the curricula in primary schools is somewhat flexible. In contrast, secondary teachers are likely to have a set number of hours in which to fulfil the reqirements for each subject. In this instance, if students are to complete course requirements, it could be inferred that it is especially important for relief teachers working in the secondary school to continue, where possible, the work of the regular teacher.

At first glance, it appears that years of training may have some bearing on relief teachers' perceptions of their role. Two and three year trained teachers within the sample are more likely to see the role as one of providing their own resources and activities. But it is interesting to note that 78.5% (12 subjects) of these teachers work in the primary school where the expectation seems to be that relief teachers will plan their own lessons.

The socio-economic background of students may have some bearing on the role of relief teachers. While it is commendable that many of these teachers have the ability to plan and implement their own lessons for a variety of classes and age groups, this study raises questions as to whether relief teachers would be more effective if they were able to continue the learning programs planned by the regular teacher, especially in lower socio-economic areas.

The majority of subjects who work in schools in lower or lower to middle socio-economic areas, believe that students perceive them as having less importance and authority than the regular teacher. In fact, it may be wondered whether some students see people who undertake relief work as teachers. Two subjects working in lower socio-economic areas report that some students have asked them if they were teachers and whether they were paid for their work.

If, in fact, some students consider these people are not teachers, or believe that they are of lesser importance than regular staff, problems are likely to arise. Others may view work planned and presented by the relief teacher as inconsequential and lower standards of presentation and effort may result. At times, resentment may be fostered by the efforts of the relief teacher to assert his/her authority (Pavlich et al, 1974, p.21 and Shreeve et al, 1987, p.314).

Effectiveness

Some authors believe that negative student attitudes are a major factor in negating relief teacher effectiveness (Pavlich et al, 1974, p.1, Rawson, 1981, p.82, Benedict, 1987, p.27 Shreeve et al, 1987, p.315 and Tasmanian Industrial Commission, 1988, p.1008). As stated previously, it seems in Tasmania there are some relief teachers who believe that students perceive that they lack the authority of the regular teacher as 57% of respondents (23 subjects) agree and 35% (13 subjects) disagree.

Within the sample, the majority of teachers working in schools in lower socio-economic areas agree with this statement and this is also the group which feels that developing a rapport with students and implementing discipline strategies to be the most important approaches to relief teaching. It is likely that, because of the attitudes of students in these schools, relief teachers must work hard at maintaining control. The implications for teachers working in such schools is that their role may become one of developing positive relationships with students and maintaining discipline rather than teaching and learning.

It seems that less experienced teachers are more likely to agree that students do not see them as having the authority of the regular teacher. In Tasmania, the Education Department (see Chapter 2) has been criticised for allowing inexperienced teachers to undertake relief work. It appears that some of these teachers were unable to control students which in turn negated their effectiveness. It is possible that these people have not had time to develop sufficient strategies and techniques to maintain discipline and are more likely to feel students perceive them as lacking in authority.

The majority of primary relief teachers within the sample are more likely than those in the secondary school to see problems with students as a major factor in negating their effectiveness. Secondary teachers and those teaching from kindergarten to grade 12 are divided between considering lack of information and student problems as major factors.

These differences may relate to the fact that many primary teachers expect to provide their own lesson plans and are not likely to be bothered by the lack of them. It is possible that student problems prevent them from implementing these lessons thereby negating their effectiveness. However, some secondary teachers are likely to be accustomed to the provision of lesson plans, especially if they frequently work out of their area of specialisation, therefore, when the relevant information is unavailable their effectiveness is negated.

Authors of literature relating to relief teaching cite student problems as the main contributor to relief teacher ineffectiveness (Pavlich et al, 1974, p.1, Rawson, 1981, p.82, Benedict, 1987, p.27 and Shreeve et al, 1987, p.315). This is endorsed by responses from the open-ended question asking subjects to indicate the factors most likely to negate the effectiveness of the relief teacher, as the majority (56.4% or 22 subjects) believe that problems with students are a major factor. Only 23% (9 subjects) felt lack of information contributes to ineffectiveness.

While lack of information poses problems relating to decisions about the most suitable educational activities to undertake and the extent of supervisory duties, time spent maintaining order disrupts learning programs as the teacher must take time from instruction to discipine unruly students. It is likely that the more time spent on controlling students, the less time in teaching and the less effective the relief teacher is in moving student learning forward.

Some negative student attitudes are likely to arise because students consider the relief teacher is intruding on the relationship between them and their teacher (Rawson, 1981, p.28 and Benedict, 1987, p.27). This may be particularly true for some students in less-affluent socio-economic areas where low incomes and unemployment coupled with the breakdown of some family units may produce feelings of insecurity. Here, the regular teacher is likely to be one of the few stable components in a child's environment. Under these circumstances, the ramifications are that the role is likely to involve more than the preparation and implementation of lesson plans or continuation of the work of the regular teacher. If relief teachers are to be effective, it is likely that developing and achieving a feeling of stability is a prior concern for these students.

Factors Causing Anxiety in Relief Teachers

Relief teaching is considered, by some researchers, to be a demanding job which offers few rewards and no regular employment (Drake, 1981, p.76,

Frosch, 1984, p.90, Clifton et al, 1985, p.67 and Shreeve et al, 1987, p.314) These teachers are likely to be treated with indifference and/or ignored completely and consequently they are unlikely to see themselves as educators and/or colleagues and may develop negative attitudes towards themselves.

Respondents are divided on the question as to whether relief teachers feel isolated and neglected because they lack contact with regular staff. It is interesting to note that the less experienced teachers are more likely to agree. Perhaps the confidence to make contact evolves through working in and becoming familiar with regular staff and school policies and procedures over a number of years.

It is possible that relief teachers are not consciously ignored or isolated. Many regular teachers are busy with their own concerns and are not aware of or sensitive to such issues. Rawson (1981, p.83) considers that if regular teachers are made aware of the problems isolation of and hostility towards relief teachers would be reduced.

On the question of other factors likely to induce anxiety in relief teachers, the data obtained from the interviews produced miscellaneous information. Some subjects stated that they have no worries because "they know what they are letting themselves in for."

Less experienced teachers have a variety of worries while more experienced teachers feel that student problems and lack of information are of greater concern. This could indicate that experienced teachers have learnt to cope with irregularity of employment, lack of resources and negative attitudes of staff.

Clifton et al (1985, p.67) conclude that relief teachers see themselves as having low staus and prestige within the educational community. Although the majority of subjects (56% or 22 subjects) agree, this aspect was not stated as one of the concerns likely to cause anxiety in relief teachers.

Training for Relief Teachers

Because of the increase in employment of relief teachers and their perceived ineffectiveness, educators in the United States of America (McIntire et al, 1982, p.702 and Augustin 1987, p.393) have suggested that training programs for relief teaching are appropriate because the skills related to this work differ from that of regular teaching. While such

statements are made, no detailed information has been presented detailing the exact nature of these skills.

During the interview, subjects were asked what they believe the differences to be between relief teaching and regular classroom teaching. The interviews produced miscellaneous responses ranging from such items as the importance of maintaining discipline and how this could be achieved, the ability to plan lessons in limited time and for the class as a whole, making judgements quickly about children's abilities, planning lessons which can be finished in a day, developing a good rapport with children in a short space of time, preparing a greater number of lessons than the regular teacher, and being adaptable and flexible. In fact, no responses were obtained that indicate there are any outstanding differences between relief and regular teaching. The main difference appears to be that the relief teacher is likely to lack information about students and that time dictates the nature of activities and classroom management techniques.

While there is strong agreement between the subjects that some preparation for relief teaching be included in initial teacher training courses, it is difficult to conceive what such a course should include. Perhaps all that can be done is to prepare those wishing or having to undertake this work for the reactions of staff and students, problems which are likely to arise and strategies for coping with them.

In relation to orientation and training for teachers wishing to undertake relief work, there was an overall agreement (87% or 34 subjects) within the group. Although this was not an open-ended question, respondents commented that they would like some kind of professional development, preferably at night, that would acquaint them with new methods and changes occurring in the classroom. Others felt they would like the opportunity to discuss ideas and strategies as a group. Some subjects felt that a base where relief teachers could obtain ideas and resources for lesson plans and activities would be a valuable asset. These suggestions are likely to be more relevant to relief teaching than programs which replicate general teacher training courses.

Orientation programs may provide opportunities for relief teachers to familiarise themselves with policies, rules and behavioural strategies in a particular school. Shreeve et al (1987, p.317), suggest that a district orientation held early in the year would be an opportunity for relief teachers and administrators to meet and questions could be asked and experiences shared.

Provision of Assistance For Relief Teachers

In Australia and the United States (see Chapters 1 and 3), it appears that problems arise when relief teachers are called at short notice because they are given little or no time to prepare. These problems are likely to be exacerbated when the school and students are unfamiliar to the relief teacher. Interviews with former Tasmanian teachers (see Chapter 2) reveal that, in the past, relief teachers were not always effective because school staff did not provide such relevant information as registers, timetables and current studies. Lesson plans might be provided but often without comprehensive instructions. Therefore, it seems logical that schools need to provide some kind of assistance if these teachers are to fulfil such expectations as the continuation of student learning programs and prevention of interruptions to school routine.

During the interviews, subjects were asked to state the kinds of measures school staff should take to provide the assistance and information they require to teach effectively. The subjects are overwhelmingly in favour of folders, for individual classes, containing information about classroom procedures, school policies, daily schedules, student information and teacher duties.

The provision of this kind of information has also been advocated by researchers (Nelson, 1983, pp.99-100, Gunderson et al, 1985, pp.160-163 and Augustin, 1987, p.394) within the literature. However, in Tasmania, it seems that opinions are divided as to whether the provision of this information is adequate. Within the sample as a whole, 46% of subjects (18) agree or strongly agree that it is insufficient and 48.6% (20 subjects) disagree or strongly disagree. Those teaching in lower socio-economic areas tend to disagree that information is inadequate. The majority of males also disagree but this may be linked to the fact that many teach, for much of their time, in schools in lower socio-economic areas. It is likely that these schools have recognised the value of providing information which will assist relief teachers in keeping to normal school routine thus ensuring a modicum of stability for their students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the past, the onus for a successful day's relief teaching is likely to have been placed on the relief teacher. But if these teachers are expected to operate effectively and efficiently, they are likely to need support and assistance from regular staff and administrators. However, before any decisions are made about the kinds of assistance necessary to help relief

teachers, regular staff should come to understand and appreciate the demands and problems inherent in this work.

Lack of role definition may at times create problems for relief teachers as the regular teacher may return to school and find that the relief teacher has not fulfilled his/her expectations in relation to the content and quality of the work undertaken with students during the absence. Knowledge of the problems facing relief teachers coupled with considerations about the needs of the school should be examined by regular staff when developing policies in relation to that role. If expectations are clarified and communicated to relief staff the best interests of the school and students are likely to be served. This could be achieved through discussions and meetings which include relief teachers who work within the school.

At times, the Tasmanian Education Department's policy (see Chapter 3) that relief teachers should take over all the teaching and supervisory duties of the absent teacher may not be feasible. For example if a relief teacher is required to teach out of his/her grade or subject level, it may not be reasonable to expect the same level of expertise and effectiveness as one who is better trained and/or more experienced. Time for preparation of lessons is often limited because relief teachers are frequently called on the day they are expected to teach. This situation is also likely to limit their effectiveness. Therefore, any decisions relating to policies about the role of the relief teacher should take into account the nature of the absence and the appropriateness of the role these teachers can be expected to undertake.

In some schools, student behaviour is likely to have an influence on the role the relief teacher. Negative student attitudes are likely to mean a greater number of disruptions which in turn lessens teaching time while discipline strategies are implemented. In these situations the relief teacher may have few alternatives other than using time normally spent in teaching and learning to develop an orderly classroom and a positive relationship with students before educationally valid activities can be undertaken. Although the amount of work completed by students may be less than that done with the regular teacher, the relief teacher should not be viewed as ineffective as the role requirements should take into account the background and needs of the students.

Because many relief assignments are likely to be short term (see Chapter 3), opportunities to get to know regular staff on a social and professional basis may be limited. Under these circumstances, some relief teachers may feel isolated and believe they are not seen as professional educators or

colleagues because contact with other teachers is restricted.

Although regular teachers are likely to be busy with their own concerns, the problem could be somewhat alleviated if a a regular staff member is made responsible for introducing the relief teacher into the school, that is, seeing that information and materials relevant to the day's teaching are available, making introductions to staff who can provide assistance and feedback, and at least once or twice during the day making some contact with the relief teacher. This kind of support could help relief teachers feel that their efforts in maintaining students' educational programs are important and valued.

Relief teachers who are seen as having problems in maintaining control and providing valid educational activities in a particular school are likely to be employed, on future occasions, as a last resort. This is likely to mean that schools end up with a small group of relief teachers who are well known to administrators and regular staff (Tasmanian Industrial Commission, 1987, p.819). While this may be convenient for these schools, it does little to help improve the quality of relief teachers. These kinds of attitudes may induce shortages of relief teachers as some, especially the inexperienced, need time to develop their skills. Some schools may need to examine their policies relating to these people and ensure that they are providing appropriate support and information as lack of these is likely to contribute to ineffectiveness.

It is important that schools provide opportunities for feedback in a non-threatening way. Relief teachers who feel they will be seen as incompetent if they discuss their problems are unlikely to provide or receive feedback if they believe that in doing so they will not be re-employed at a particular school. Discussion is important because it allows the opportunity to consider and implement strategies that will benefit both the school and relief teachers.

It seems that some students see a day with a relief teacher as an opportunity to break school rules and disrupt routine. Others resent the break in the relationship with their regular teacher (Chapters 1, 2 and 3). In fact, according to the survey, problems created by students are the most likely factor to negate the effectiveness of the relief teacher. Under these circumstances school staff need to be prepared to provide assistance with discipline problems as some students see the relief teacher as lacking the authority of the regular teacher. This may entail acquainting the relief teacher with strategies for coping, removing and/or isolating severely disruptive students, following up after the relief teacher has left the school

so that students learn that there are consequences for lack of cooperation on these occasions.

Regular teachers should communicate, to students, an interest in and appreciation of the work done in their absence. In this student's experience, it is gratifying to find that work completed by students during a relief assignment has been put on display. Appreciation and interest could also entail some discussion, in a positive way, with students about their achievements during the relief day/days.

Information on such items as school and class routines, current studies and curricula, and students with behaviour and medical problems (see Chapter 5) is likely to be crucial in organising educationally valid and relevant lessons for a particular class. Although authors of the literature for relief teaching (see Chapter 1) believe that lack of or inadequate lesson plans can be blamed for contributing to relief teacher ineffectiveness, the majority of respondents to the questionnaire think that information, like that above, is more important.

Subjects believe the maintenance of discipline is especially important during a relief assignment as student behaviour is likely to deteriorate when a relief teacher is present. Information about behaviour problems and strategies for handling them are likely to allow the relief teacher to deal quickly and effectively with problems thereby minimising disruption to student learning and the school generally. Some people feel it is important to be introduced to a staff member who will assist with discipline problems.

In those classrooms where students have a set seating position, a seating plan is likely to enable the relief teacher to learn students' names. This in turn is an aid to discipline as the teacher may only have to speak the relevant student's name to let him/her know that inappropriate behaviour is noticed. Students may also swap seats because they know the relief teacher is likely to be ignorant of the usual seating arrangements. This can mean that unsuitable combinations can be seated next to one another and behaviour problems may occur. With a seating plan, this can be checked and some difficulties are likely to be avoided.

Continuity in school routine is likely to be important, especially in secondary schools where hours for subjects are limited. This makes the provision of adequate lesson plans and information, on the current curriculum in a particular class, important as it is likely to enable the relief teacher to continue and extend student learning programs.

Information about lessons needs to be combined with general and specialist timetables, and break times. This helps to minimise interruptions to class routine, and other teachers, and facilitates the planning of lessons and activities for the day. Consequently, students are less likely to become disturbed by breaks in routine.

Many of the subjects indicate that, because they are often unfamiliar with the intellectual capacities of students within a particular classroom, they plan and implement lessons they feel are suitable for the class as a whole. Because the relief teacher does not have the luxury of time to get to know students, it is likely that some notes need to be included about students' physical and learning problems. With this knowledge, allowances can then be made for slow learners in relation to their ability to cope with and/or finish work.

Some information on severe medical problems, such as epilepsy and asthma, and what to do and/or who to inform in the event of related difficulties, is likely to allow the relief teacher to act promptly and effectively.

Because the relief teacher is responsible for the well being of students and may be held liable in the event of an accident or injury to students the following kinds of information may be of some value. These brief notes could include school rules and routines such as movement through the school, bus times, procedures for ordering and collecting from the canteen, expectations of student behaviour in the yard and classroom, yard duty and areas to be patrolled, procedures for fire drill, some mention of students who have permission to leave the school grounds at lunch time and any special arrangements for those being collected after school.

It is important that regular teachers see their class registers are current as relief teachers need these, not only to take attendance, but in the event where an evacuation is prompted by fire or bomb threat, relief teachers are able to check that all students are safe.

One of the factors considered as likely to negate the effectiveness of the relief teacher is the inability to locate books and materials needed for the day. Subjects felt that it was important that either information be provided or that the relief teacher should be introduced to a staff member who could provide such assistance and information.

A map of the school buildings and duty areas is likely to aid the relief teacher in locating such things as the staffroom, toilets, specialist

classrooms, teaching materials and any duty areas where he/she is expected to supervise.

Personal experience indicates that the provision of information in some schools is lacking. While some have included a variety of information relating to the above points, others feel the necessity to include only timetables and a duty roster. Some schools have students who cope well with a change in teachers but even these need some mention of behavioural expectations and the consequences for students whose behaviour is inappropriate.

Information about students and the school has the capacity to enable the relief teacher to find his/her feet quickly, without interruptions to other staff members or relying on information from students, which at times can be misleading. With knowledge of routines and rules the relief teacher can proceed with some confidence to plan viable educational activities relevant to students.

The provision of information is likely to empower the relief teacher to organise activities and locate associated teaching materials in a more independent way, to become familiar with the rules and the consequences for students who break them, to apply relevant discipline strategies quickly and efficiently before problems get out of hand and a regular staff member must be sent for, and to maintain the routine, especially with specialist lessons.

It is important that relief teachers, in turn, provide adequate information about the activities they present during the day. Relief teachers who do not do so are doing themselves and others a disservice. Such notes mean that the regular teacher can assess the quality of the activities and the efforts made by the relief teacher. It is difficult to show interest and appreciation if the teacher does not know what has taken place, as information from students can be misleading.

It is not surprising that some relief teachers feel a degree of apprehension or anxiety especially if they are faced, on a regular basis, with groups of unknown students in a variety of schools which are likely to have different routines, rules and discipline strategies. The provision of positive feedback, information relevant to schools and individual classrooms, support with discipline and opportunities to make social and professional contacts with staff is likely to alleviate these anxieties and apprehensions.

Although the majority of subjects within the sample believe that aspects of

relief teaching should be included with initial teacher training courses, it is unlikely time would permit this. Another consideration relates to the most suitable people to impart this information as they need to fully understand and appreciate the demands of this work.

Because responses about the approaches for relief teaching are so diverse, it seems experience is likely to be the greatest teacher. A more valid approach, than that which seeks to include aspects of relief teaching in initial teacher training courses, might be the opportunity to meet and discuss relevant issues with other more experienced relief teachers. Orientation and training days early in the school year, where those interested could meet with regular and other relief teachers, could provide opportunities to learn something about the policies and procedures in specific schools.

CONCLUSIONS

Although relief teachers experience some of the problems recorded in the literature, efforts are being made in some Tasmanian schools to overcome these. Information is being provided in some schools and this assists the relief teacher in organising activities and maintaining the smooth running of the classroom. This, combined with regular staff support with discipline and feedback, has the capacity to diminish the problems inherent in relief teaching. Schools which make an effort to assist relief teachers in these ways are likely to have fewer problems in obtaining their services.

In the past, although there were difficulties in introducing relief teachers into Tasmanian schools, evidence provided by correspondence and memoranda in Education Department files, interviews with retired teachers and newspaper articles (see Chapter 2) suggests that students suffer fewer interruptions when relief teachers are employed.

It is not always possible for the relief teacher to replicate the regular teacher or to teach what would have been undertaken on the day the absence occurs. Educators in the United States of America seem somewhat perturbed by these circumstances because they feel that students, who spend over ten percent of their school life with a relief teacher, are likely to have their learning programs disrupted to such an extent that they will be disadvantaged on leaving school.

Other alternatives to the employment of relief teachers, such as sending children home or doubling classes (see Chapters 2 and 3) do not appear to be in any way more advantageous as, in the first, school routine is

completely disrupted and, in the second, two classes are likely to suffer interruptions.

Throughout Australia (see Chapter 3), there are likely to be many teachers capable of continuing and extending the program of the absent teacher if the relevant information is available. Those who are not provided with this are likely to have their own preplanned lessons. Some respondents who participated in the survey felt that their role is to provide activities that are educational, thought provoking, interesting and challenging. In these situations, some students may even benefit from time spent with a relief teacher.

While students' educational progress is of the ultimate importance, this survey raises, but does not necessarily answer, questions which are likely to have wider educational and organisational implications. At present, it is debatable whether the skills of relief teachers are used to their full extent or that they see themselves treated as professional educators at any level of the education system.

A clear, realistic definition and subsequent policy making could develop the relief teachers' role into a more satisfactory form of employment and, at the same time, use skills more efficiently. However, information obtained from education authorities throughout Australia (see Chapter 3), suggests that such a definition is lacking.

The Tasmanian Education Department has defined the role as one where the relief teacher should take over all the teaching and supervisory duties of the absent teacher. However, this is limited as it makes no allowances for the circumstances of the absence or the ability of available relief teachers to replace the expertise of the absent teacher. Nevertheless, it is understandable that problems arise as it is likely that nature of the absence will dictate the role. Therefore, a definition, such as the one above, is unlikely to cover all contingencies.

It is likely that such a definition should be extended to cover a range of circumstances relating to absences. Where absences are planned for such events as seminars, there are greater opportunities for discussions between regular and relief teachers. Under these circumstances the lessons, duties and routines of the regular teacher might well be undertaken by the relief teacher. However, when relief teachers are called the morning they are required to teach, they might be expected to provide their own educationally valid activities and maintain an orderly classroom.

The expectations for relief teachers, who do not replicate the teachers they replace, is likely to differ because these people may not possess the specialised skills needed to continue particular learning programs. The role, in this instance, might be the keeping of discipline and supervision of work set by the regular teacher or colleague.

Although much discussion has taken place about the needs of students, it is likely that those of the relief teacher are rarely considered. Access to professional development appears to be severely limited as seminars are generally held during the day when relief teachers are covering the classes of others attending such sessions. However, opportunities provided out of school hours are likely to mean that the cost of attending such professional development may also be prohibitive. Therefore, some thought should be given to this area as it is not feasible to expect a high quality of relief cover if these teachers are not given access to new methods and ideas.

It seems relief teachers are expected to work as professional educators but between relief assignments there seems to be very little interest taken in their professional welfare. In fact, it is likely that there is very little support structure for these teachers and the lack of clear directives, policies and professional development opportunities are indicative of this. It seems that between assignments they are "invisible." Frosch (1984, p.89) argues that relief teachers are felt to be very useful in emergencies but when the regular teacher returns they are forgotten. Hence, it is not surprising that some subjects believe relief teachers have low staus within the educational community.

The onus for including relief teachers as part of the educational team should not be placed entirely on individual schools as, until there are further considerations about the working conditions of and expectations about the role of these teachers, from the highest level of educational administration, they are likely to continue to be under-utilised and under-valued.

Therefore, the development of an understanding of the demands of relief teaching, subsequent policy making in relation to the role of the relief teacher, and the support of the education system as a whole for these teachers, is likely to improve the status and effectiveness of these people and, ultimately benefit all concerned.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEWS WITH RETIRED TASMANIAN TEACHERS

APPENDIX 1

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEWS WITH RETIRED TEACHERS

Nine retired teachers were interviewed to gain information on the following:

- the years in which these people taught;
- how teacher absences were covered before the advent of relief teachers;
- the factors which influenced the way in which classes were covered;
- the problems associated with the methods used to cover the classes of absent teachers;
- the advantages of covering teacher absences with staff from within the school;
- the effect of teacher absences on students' education;
- the employment of relief teachers; and
- the problems associated with relief teaching.

INTERVIEW I

Question: When did you begin teaching?

Answer: I began in 1941. I spent 6 months as a junior teacher, then I did 6 months teacher training and spent two years at university. I went off to the war and when I came back I was given another year's training so I used this to finish my university degree.

Question: Were you teaching in primary or high schools?

Answer: I taught in three different high schools as a maths and science teacher. In 1963 I moved to an administrative position. My actual teaching period was from 1947 until 1963.

Question: Did you have relief teachers to cover the absence of regular teachers?

Answer: There were no relief teachers in the fifties. We covered internally. There were no relief teachers used, as far as I know, in high schools until around about the 1970's.

Question: How did you cover teacher absences?

Answer: We had 40 period weeks, we taught 32 periods and had 8 free periods. If anyone was away we would lose our free periods because we would have to supervise classes.

Question: Was there any preparation left by the absent teacher to help the supervising teacher?

Answer: When teachers went sick, they had a responsibility to program. They would ring in and say what work the children were to go on with. Teachers with free periods would then supervise the class or classes. If it was the supervising teacher's subject area then he would teach. If not then the teacher would just supervise and see that the work was done. They would set homework. This would give continuity even when the regular teacher was not there.

Question: How did schools cope when there were a lot of teachers away at once?

Answer: This seemed to happen only occasionally. Sometimes we had times of crisis when there was a lot of flu about. We sometimes combined classes in a crisis. In some schools there might be three maths classes. If one of the maths teachers was away we would combine the three maths classes into two classes. If it wasn't your subject, your didn't presume to teach it, you just supervised. If there was a shortage of teachers to supervise classes, teachers supervised two classes next door to one another. At Murray High, there were sliding doors between classrooms and these could be opened up and the teacher could supervise through the door. Occasionally we had a crisis when we couldn't combine classes.

Sometimes classes would be sent to the library to read because there was nobody to supervise them. Often there was no librarian; they were there on trust and the teacher nearest the library would keep an ear on the class to check the noise level didn't get too high. Sometimes kids were sent into the yard to read books or to sit in the corridor near a strong teacher. In the late 40's and 50's student teachers on prac teaching would be used to take the classes if the teacher was absent. I had to do it once. I don't think I did a very good job though. The classes were pretty big in those days.

Question: What was the average size of classes then?

Answer: The biggest class I had after the war was 48. Some people had

50. These days they complain when they have 25 or 30.

Question: How did the combining of classes or supervision affect the children's education?

Answer: If it was short term it was alright. We tried to put people who were familiar with the subject into the class. If you had to supervise then you lost your free periods and then marking and preparation suffered. As long as the teacher was not away for long periods it wasn't deleterious to the children. Some classes went to the pack because there was no continuity in teachers. In the 50's and 60's there were no spare teachers. I remember going for weeks or months with supervision because a teacher had left and there was no replacement. Then the children's education suffered. When I was a kid I went to a country school. About once every two years a message would come to say the teacher would be away for two days and that we were not to go to school for those days.

INTERVIEW 2

Question: In what years did you teach?

Answer: I began in 1951 and retired in 1973. I taught in high schools.

Question: How did these schools cover teacher absences?

Answer: There were no relief teachers until the 70's. We used teachers from within the schools. It was easier for high schools to cover because we had a timetable of 40 periods a week. We taught 32 periods and had 8 free periods. It was harder to cover in primary schools because the teachers taught full time. Often the principal taught as well so there were no extra teachers to supervise classes. In the high school, teachers with free periods were called upon to supervise.

Question: Did you ever have to combine classes because there were not enough teachers?

Answer: We always had enough staff. I don't ever remember putting two classes together. There were fewer absences in those days. Teaching was a calling. People didn't mind teaching extra periods or big classes of 60 to 70. We wanted to teach because we enjoyed it. In those days of pre-t.v. teachers brought life and culture to children with things like world affairs, literature and music. Once children used to hang on every word. They were interested and they worked hard. Children worked hard alongside

you. It was a competitive world and classes were thrilling. Teachers could handle tough kids in big classes. There were also strong teachers with good principals and masters of subject departments. Teachers were revered and backed by society. In the last ten and a half years the situation has changed; where parents won't have children punished. Teachers are tentative about taking a strong hand.

Question: Was there any work prepared for the supervising teachers?

Answer: I always taught in strong schools where there were good working habits. Programs had to be handed in every Monday morning. Teachers had to plan a fortnight ahead. The relief teacher could pick up the program of work and go on. If someone was sick, they would often send a message about the work. If there were not enough teachers to cover the teacher who was away, the principal would teach full-time if necessary.

Question: Did teachers have to teach out of their subject areas?

Answer: Teaching was more definite and simple in those days. Teachers used text books and taught using the blackboard and chalk. Teachers commonly had to teach out of their subject area but they were more broadly educated than they are today. In those days you couldn't matriculate unless you had maths, science, history, geography and English. Teachers were also taught teaching methods in a broad range of subjects.

Question: What kinds of problems occurred when schools covered absences internally?

Answer: The situation was not always ideal. Obviously some teachers are more competent than others. The best teachers were put on the more difficult classes. Sometimes, when more junior teachers took these classes on, not much was done during those lessons. Bringing in outsiders was also a risk because it takes time to learn to control a class. We had strength in the masters of subjects department and it was their responsibility to check what was going on, to check on the person covering the class.

Question: How did this situation affect the children's education?

Answer: It depended whether the absence was short or long term. Sometimes there were situations when someone was put in a classroom to control, to see that mayhem wasn't going on. If the teacher was not absent

for too long it wasn't so bad. If it went on for too long then the children's work began to suffer.

Question: What kinds of experiences have you had with relief teachers?

Answer: When I was in regional office we didn't always send relief. We expected the schools to cover for the first two days. Later there was a gradual hardening of attitude from the Teachers' Federation and they managed to get more money for relief. Some schools would cover better than others. Some schools were selfish and would want relief immediately. I think it's sometimes better to cover internally because there's work involved in bringing in a relief teacher. You have to show them round the school and show them where everything is and this takes a long time. We expected over quota staffed schools to cover indefinitely. Quite often retired people were used in the 70's and early 80's because they knew the school. They were well-known by the children, the children liked them and they fitted in well. I think there's probably a greater need for relief teachers these days because the basic complement in schools has been pruned. Teachers seem more beleaguered. There are more difficult children, more children from broken homes. The population used to see schools as wonderful places. There was gratitude from parents and children. We used to have parents' backing. These days if a stranger enters the classroom he has to fight for control. Parents are often belligerent.

INTERVIEW 3

Question: In what years did you teach?

Answer: I started in 1928 and continued teaching in 1929 and 1930. I also taught during the war in 1942 and 1943 and then I taught at Friends for a year in 1954 and at Bellerive in 1953.

Question: Were relief teachers employed during the years you were teaching?

Answer: In the twenties there were no such things as relief teachers. If someone was sick a couple of teachers looked after the class but this happened very infrequently. I don't remember it happenening very often.

Question: Did they divide the classes up?

Answer: The teacher in the next room usually looked after the class and

gave them some work to do. She went from one class to the other and supervised. The classes were too big to divide up. If you had 40 children in a class, you felt you had a small class. Sometimes classes went up to 70 and this was considered to be a very big class. Normal classes had between 45 and 50 children. You could hardly cram any more children into a classroom.

Question: Were there any problems in covering a class in this way?

Answer: Not really. Discipline was much stricter in those days. The children sat in their desks. They didn't move about the room like they do now. They were so regimented all the supervising teacher had to do was to give them work to do and keep an eye on them. If they wished to speak to the teacher they put their hand up. During the war I wanted to do something to help. I felt I could best do this as a teacher. I taught in high schools during the war. Even then high schools were very regimented.

Question: How did they organise supervision for absent teachers?

Answer: Anyone who had a free period would have to supervise for an absent teacher.

Question: Can you think of any reasons why absences were not covered by relief teachers?

Answer: In those days teachers were hardly ever absent. I think we must have been tougher in those days.

Question: Was there ever a shortage of teachers?

Answer: In the twenties our schools were fully staffed. Classes had 50 or 60 children. During the war anyone could get a job. I started in the infant school at Princes Street but during the war I went into high schools, which I thoroughly enjoyed. I never knew of any unemployed teachers during the twenties. They were trained and paid by the Education Department and then employed by them.

INTERVIEW 4

Question: In what years did you teach?

Answer: I was a junior teacher in 1932. I trained at Teachers College in 1933 for one year and I began teaching in 1934 and retired in 1973. I

taught in primary schools at first and then in high schools.

Question: How did schools cover the absences of teachers?

Answer: We filled in internally. There were no relief teachers for a long time. In high schools, teachers often had to cover other subjects which they were not trained for. For example, sometimes maths teachers had to cover French classes. Sometimes it was just baby-minding.

Question: Were there advantages in covering absences internally?

Answer: Yes it's better to cover internally and work it so that teachers are teaching their own subjects. When I was at Ogilvie a book was kept with all the names of the teachers on the staff and the subjects they could teach. From this the headmaster could organise teachers to take subjects for the teacher who was absent. Teachers did not always have to be specially trained. We had to make do with the resources available to us.

Question: Were there any other advantages?

Answer: Yes. A familiar person knew the routine. This was better for discipline but a lot depended on the staff. It was better to have someone who knew the subject although many teachers in high school were uni trained and had a broad general knowledge. If outsiders came into the school there was no guarantee they could do the job.

Question: How did schools cover teachers attending seminars?

Answer: There were not a lot of seminars, not to the extent we had to substitute teachers. We usually filled in from inside the school.

Question: What happened if there was an influenza epidemic and many teachers in the school went on sick leave?

Answer: This didn't seem to cause concern. We occasionally got someone in from outside to fill in but this was not usual. When I retired I did some relief in several high schools but eventually narrowed it down to New Town and Ogilvie.

Question: In your experience, what kinds of problems are associated with relief teaching?

Answer: When a teacher is taken ill suddenly, work is not always programmed. Sometimes the work was set out but it was not always well

done because the directions were not very comprehensive. I had a remedial class I found very difficult to handle but I found academic children are interested in their work and can usually tell you what they have been doing. Things have changed over the last few years. The curriculum used to be more or less set but now when you go into a classroom you wouldn't know what the children might be doing. Teachers are allowed to choose the subject matter in their courses.

INTERVIEW 5

Question: In what years did you teach?

Answer: In 1944 to 1946 I taught on Bruny Island. I was the only teacher and I had 45 children from kindergarten to grade 7.

Question: What happened if you were absent?

Answer: If I was sick, the children had the day off. There was no-one else to take the class. Things were different when I went back in the 70's. I taught in primary schools. If I was away, we could have a relief teacher.

Question: When you knew you were going to be away did you leave any preparation for the relief teacher?

Answer: I don't know what other teachers did but if I knew I was going to be on leave I planned ahead. I always planned for three months ahead for each term's work. From this plan I wrote up the week's work. I also had daily planning. I always wrote down anything that had not been finished. I always left a full plan for the relief teacher if I was going to be away. The way I planned allowed any relief teacher to come into the room and pick up where I had left off and go on teaching.

Question: Were there any problems in having a relief teacher take over the class?

Answer: Some relief teachers did a good job. Others were paid to babysit. They read stories, let the children draw but did not really teach anything. One relief teacher spent the day in my room playing games and reading stories. Controlling children was often a problem. Children often `whack' it over relief teachers. I came back after a relief teacher had been in my room and found the children had done a lot of drawings. They had told the relief teacher they usually spent the afternoon doing art.

INTERVIEW 6

Question: In what years did you teach?

Answer: I worked in the 1950's. I worked as a full-time teacher and I also did relief work. I worked in primary and high schools.

Question: Was the relief work that was available in the 50's long or short term?

Answer: I think it was mostly long term, at least a week or more. I don't think there was much short term relief available in those days.

Question: What was expected of you as a relief teacher?

Answer: You had to use your own initiative. You were not there as achild minder. You were expected to teach. You were expected to deal with problems in the classrooms youself. You were expected to deal with your own discipline problems.

Question: In your experience, what were the problems relating to relief teaching?

Answer: It's a difficult job teaching a class you don't know. You have to establish a rapport. The children test you out for a few days. It usually takes 2 or 3 days to establish yourself.

Question: Were there any problems in teaching the various subjects?

Answer: You were expected to do everything. You were expected to know what to do without being told. If there was no preparation left for you, you asked the children what they were up to. You did the best you could. I used to take any subjects. The only thing I refused to do was teach recorder because they sounded so awful. I would take anything else.

INTERVIEW 7

Question: In what years did you teach?

Answer: I taught in 1937 to 1974 inclusive and some of 75. I began as a junior teacher at age 17 at Princes Street. I had one year at Teachers' College supposedly training as an art teacher. Because there was very little associated with art teaching at College I also went to the Technical College. I used to run backwards and forwards from one to the other. I

was always in trouble at College for being late. I then taught art in high schools.

Question: How did the schools cover the absence of teachers?

Answer: Originally someone in the school looked over two rooms at once. I was at Hobart High for 3 years. They had a very dedicated staff. There were wonderful opportunities for kids. When a teacher was away someone would look at the timetable to see who had free periods. There were absences every day. You would often get a slip of paper telling you to go to English, room number such and such and the period you were to supervise. You didn't always teach your own subject. Originally you covered everything. The children were motivated. They could tell you what they had done and where they would be going onto.

Question: Did you have access to the absent teacher's program?

Answer: Yes we did have access to the program but it was very difficult to pick up what had to be gone on with. The schools I worked in were very tightly run. They were a lot easier to work in. If a teacher was not available to supervise you would start the class off and then go back and teach your own and check back on the other class later. The art department tried to cover their own subject because of the complexity of the lessons and materials.

Question: What happened when a teacher was absent on a long term basis?

Answer: The Department usually sent someone. I used to keep an art folder with enough paper for a class to hand to whoever was supervising the class. I had a chart with suggestions written on it in large print so that the supervising teacher could pin it up on the wall. This saved time as the class could look at the chart and the children could choose a topic and begin work straight away. I think it's very important to get the children working immediately because you are less likely to have discipline problems. If you get them occupied in the first few minutes you can knock off and do what you like. Command of the class is important. I also kept what I called a first aid kit. It was a box of equipment, things like rubbers, rulers, pencils, crayons etc., so that the teacher taking the class wouldn't have to spend time hunting for materials and there was no excuse for indiscipline.

Question: Were there problems for people covering a subject that was not

their own?

Answer: Some people could go into any class and do something relevant whatever the subject. Other people would go in and just supervise the class rather than teach. In the 60's and 70's when we needed relief on a long term basis we would ring the Department. Sometimes they would send someone but these people were not always trained teachers. Once we had a youg girl from Melbourne who was trained in the design field. She was sent to teach art although she had not been trained as an art teacher. She was sent there at 8 o'clock one morning and put straight in the classroom and she did her level best to do the job. This sort of thing happened a lot straight after the war. Anybody could get a job. They were practically dragging people in off the streets because they were so short of teachers.

Question:What was the attitude of school staff towards relief teachers?

Answer: Schools were bursting at the seams, something to do with the babyboom after the war. At Rose Bay we had over 1,000 children and one more child entering the school became a problem; where to house, seat or find a locker for the child. In some schools there was not enough room in a classroom to fit the whole class. The teacher had children sitting in the corridor and used to rotate groups of children between the classroom and the corridor each week. We were desperately busy so there wasn't time for the niceties like welcoming a teacher or showing them round the school. They probably felt neglected and didn't realise how grateful we were to have someone. Most of the relief teaching I experienced was very much ad hoc. People were not always replaced and quite often any replacements had no teacher training.

Question: Do you think the children's education may have been adversely affected by the ways in which classes were covered?

Answer: Not really. Perhaps if the absence was really long term there may have been some problems.

INTERVIEW 8

Question: In which years did you teach?

Answer: I started as a junior teacher in 1941. I went to college in '44 and '45 and I finished in 1987.

Question: Were you teaching in primary or high schools?

Answer: I was in the infant school.

Question: What experience have you had with relief teachers?

Answer: When I first started teaching there weren't any. Classes were often sent home.

Question: Did you ever split any of these classes and put them in with another class?

Answer: At Queenstown there was an infant department with an infant mistress. The classes had 50 to 60 children. You just couldn't fit them into another classroom. Classrooms were bursting at the seams. When I taught at Oatlands Disrict School we used to split classes. We were able to send the children who lived in the town home but some children came from outer areas and they had to stay at school. These children were farmed out around the other classes. I had a class of 70 but as I didn't get sick while I was there it didn't affect my class. When teachers were absent the other classes were farmed out wherever there was space. A grade 3, for instance, may have been sent to a grade 7 class. The children took paper and pencils or crayons and spent the day amusing themselves.

Question: When were you teaching at Oatlands?

Answer: This was in 1946.

Question: Was teacher absenteeism a problem at this time?

Answer: Teachers dragged themselves to school. The Federation wanted relief on demand. It was not really practical for teachers to come to school when they were ill because they spread germs among the other staff who would get sick as well. Some teachers neglect themselves to the detriment of their health.

Question: Were you ever in the situation where you had to teach your own

class and supervise the class in the next room?

Answer: Yes I have had to supervise classes in the next room but it wasn't good. They tended to get noisy and not a lot of work got done although they didn't get right out of control. When you went in you could get them back under control quite easily.

Question: In your experience, when were relief teachers first used?

Answer: I can remember in the 1960's we were allowed to get some relief at Queenstown. These were teachers who lived in the area. I'm not sure whether they got paid but I assume they did.

Question: Did these people do short term relief?

Answer: Yes they did relief on a daily basis.

Question: It would seem primary schools started using relief teachers before high school. What do you think would be the reason for this?

Answer: When I was acting Infant Mistress in 1965-'66, the Department felt it was not good enough to be messing about with classes. Primary schools had no-one free to take over when someone was absent. Usually, everybody had a class. I think the Department felt it was better for the children to have a relief teacher.

Question: How did the absence of the teacher affect the children?

Answer: When teachers weren't replaced the children became unhappy and insecure. Their general education suffered if the absence was too long.

Question: What preparations did you make for relief teachers?

Answer: Because we used to program ahead, the relief teacher would know what was to be done but wouldn't always do it as the children were accustomed to having it done. This was the main problem. Also the standard between the teacher and the relief teacher varied. Sometimes the relief teacher was not particular as to how the work was done. Other relief teachers were too particular. I came back once and found pages had been ripped out of children's books. If I knew I was going to be away I locked up the children's books.

Question: How did the children react to a relief teacher?

Answer: Children often resent not having their regular teacher. I can remember one class, in particular, who were a very difficult group, acting badly because the relief teacher was touching their teacher's things. Later when I was an Infant Mistress and a Vice Principal, I built up a team of relief teachers and when I moved to another school I took them with me. The children got accustomed to them and they got to know the children.

Question: How did school staff members react to relief teachers?

Answer: There were a few hassles in the beginning when the ground rules were being laid. When relief teachers were first employed teachers didn't realise there would be hassles. We had to make sure the encumbent teacher had the register and program up to date. The timetable became a hassle when things were freer. By that I mean when one lesson flowed into another. The relief teacher neede to know when things like assembly, physical education and music are on. Children hate their routine to be disturbed. I always felt the timetable didn't hurt because children like routine. There's another

thing I had thought to tell you. It built up over the years and was prevalent during the 70's and it used to worry me. The Federation received reports that in some schools relief teachers were seen as fair game. They were given extra duty and some of the dirty jobs. I think it was this kind of thing which led to the formation of the Relief Teachers Association. I always let my relief teachers know I needed them as soon as I possibly could. If possible the night before. I used to get annoyed with teachers who knew they were not well but didn't ring till late. I liked to give the relief teacher plenty of time to get ready.

INTERVIEW 9

Question: In what years did you teach?

Answer: I started teaching in the Depression. I was at Invermay in 1933 and I retired in 1973.

Question: Did you you teach in primary or high schools?

Answer: I was in the primary school.

Question: How did schools cover the absence of regular teachers?

Answer: Sometimes classes were doubled up. If there was no-one to

supervise the class was left on their own with occasional supervision from another teacher. When I was a principal I used to cover quite a few of the classes myself. This was in the 1950's when there was no thought of relief teachers. At one stage I had to use a junior teacher to help with relief. She wasn't trained.

Question: When did you start using relief teachers in your school?

Answer: In the 60,s we were able to use a relief teacher occasionally. I took on a fair share of relief teaching myself. I can't remember much absence. I had one teacher who caused problems but I used to call a relief teacher who could be there promptly.

Question: How did the absence of teachers affect children's education?

Answer: I had one teacher in the 1950's who was absent because her parents became ill. She lived with her parents and had quite a long way to come to school. When her parents became ill she just stayed away. I could only replace her with an untrained monitor. This was also a grade 6 class when grade 6 was a very important year. My own daughter was also in this class. It was in the days when children sat exams for scholarships and to qualify for a place in high schools. It had a devastating effect because hardly any of the children passed. It was very serious but I couldn't do anything about it.

Question: Did you experience any problems in relation to relief teachers?

Answer: I can't remember any particular problems with relief teachers. I had a very good staff. The school was in a good area and it was well run. When I had relief teachers they were given a very thorough briefing about the school. I used to use two relief teachers who knew the school very well. One was a retired teacher and I think she had been a teacher at the school. They fitted into the school. I also think it's easier to fit a relief teacher into a big staff. We had 30 teachers at Howrah and we were able to provide help for the relief teachers. In a big staff, a relief teacher can be absorbed into the staff. There's a greater possibility of helping relief teachers in a big school. In a small school there is less chance of spreading the expertise because everyone is busy.

Question: Was there a shortage of teachers during the war?

Answer: I don't really know because I went away to the war. I joined the airforce. I had to ask permission from the Director-General but there was

no trouble in getting it. I think there was possibly a shortage because quite a few teachers joined up. I went to Devonport after the war but I can't remember any real problems with staffing. We did had very large classes. In 1959, at Trinity Hill, we had two grade 6 classes each with 64 children. We were able two split the 5's. I remember one of the teachers was ecstatic because she only had 39 children. She had never had such a small class.

APPENDIX 2

PILOT QUESTIONNAIRE

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

RELIEF TEACHING

SECTION ONE

We would like to commence by obtaining some information from you about certain aspects of your personal and professional background.

1. What gender are you?

Male.....1

Female.....2

2. Which of the following best describes your professional status?

Relief teacher infant.....1

Relief teacher primary.....2

Relief teacher secondary.....3

Senior staff.....4

Classroom teacher.....5

Other (please specify).....6

.....

3.Which of the following categories best describes your teacher training?

One year trained 1

Two year trained.....2

Three year trained.....3

Four year trained.....4

Other (please specify)....5

.....

4. How many years have you taught as a full time teacher? [ ] years

5. Please indicate which of the following best describes the socio-economic background of the students in the school/s in which you are currently employed.

Higher 1

Middle.....2

Lower.....3

6. How many years have you worked as a relief teacher? Round up or down to the nearest year. ☐ years

If you are not a relief teacher please go to question 8.

7. Which of the following items best describe your reason for becoming a relief teacher? Please rank in order of importance from 1 to 4 (that is, with 1 indicating the view which best coincides with yours and 4 indicating the view which least coincides).

a. A teaching position is not available to me at present. ☐

b. I enjoy the freedom of choosing when and where I work. ☐

c. Relief teaching allows me to fulfil family and/or other commitments ..... ☐

d. Relief teaching provides me with an opportunity to maintain my teaching skills while also allowing time to pursue other interests and/or hobbies ..... ☐

e. Other reasons ☐

Please specify, in the space below, any other reasons you have for becoming a relief teacher.....

.....

.....

.

SECTION TWO

This section of the questionnaire seeks to obtain information about attitudes towards relief teachers.

8. Please rank the following statements to best coincide with your overall view of the attitudes you encounter. (Use numbers 1 to 3 with 1 indicating the the view which best coincides with yours and 3 indicating the one which least coincides.)

School administrators and staff see relief teachers as

a. Adequate to cover the absence of the regular teacher for short periods of time .... ☐

b. Being professional educators and colleagues .... ☐

c. Lacking in official status and experience .... ☐

9. Research relating to relief teaching indicates that there is some confusion amongst school administrators, regular staff and relief teachers themselves about the role of the relief teacher. Please rank in order of importance from 1 to 4 (that is, with 1 being the most important and 4 the least) the following four statements to best coincide with your overall view of the role of the relief teacher.

a. To maintain an orderly classroom, following appropriate school and classroom procedures. .... ☐

b. To provide educationally valid activities whether or not lesson plans and information on children's abilities are available. .... ☐

c. To take over all the teaching and supervisory duties which would have been performed by the absent teacher on that day. .... ☐

d. To act as a "caretaker" and in so doing provide activities which keep students busy and interested. .... ☐

Are there any other key aspects to the relief teacher's role in your view? If so please specify.

.....

.....

.....

10. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following by circling the number which corresponds to the most appropriate statement.

a. "Generally relief teachers rarely receive adequate positive feedback from school administrators and staff."

strongly agree	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
strongly disagree	5

b. "Relief teachers are seen by school administrators, regular staff members and students as having a low status and prestige in the educational community."

strongly agree	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
strongly disagree	5

c. "Relief teachers feel isolated and neglected because they lack contact with school administrators and staff."

strongly agree	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
strongly disagree	5

d. "The casual relief teacher is often a stranger at a new school and is likely to find that the provision of information on school routine, timetables, lesson plans and related material, playground procedures and supervisory duties, is often neglected by regular staff."

strongly agree	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
strongly disagree	5

SECTION 3

11. Below is a list of factors which may contribute to feelings of anxiety or apprehension amongst relief teachers.

Please consider each of the items listed below in turn, and for each item indicate, by circling the appropriate number on the 1 to 4 scale, the extent to which you feel they do cause apprehension and/or anxiety for relief teachers.

Potential anxiety factors	*Levels of apprehension*			
	high	*moderate*	*low*	*non-existent*
Regularity of employment	1	2	3	4
Transient nature of the job	1	2	3	4
Job satisfaction	1	2	3	4
Economic and job security	1	2	3	4
Preventing discipline problems	1	2	3	4
Negative student attitudes	1	2	3	4
Knowledge of students' abilities	1	2	3	4
Knowledge of students' problems	1	2	3	4
Knowledge of the current curriculum in a particular class	1	2	3	4
Enhancing students' academic learning	1	2	3	4
Relationship with students	1	2	3	4
Providing educationally valid activities for all levels of ability in a class	1	2	3	4
Finding no lesson plans or inadequate lesson plans	1	2	3	4
Finding a complex lesson plan	1	2	3	4
Availability of information on school policies and procedures	1	2	3	4
Feedback from principal and other senior staff	1	2	3	4
Feedback from other members of school staff	1	2	3	4
Being viewed as an outsider	1	2	3	4
Gaining administrative acceptance and approval	1	2	3	4

Potential anxiety factors	*Levels of apprehension*			
	high	*moderate*	*low*	*non-existent*
Gaining respect from regular teachers	1	2	3	4
Feeling isolated from the staff school	1	2	3	4
Teaching in an unfamiliar area, i.e. subject area or class level	1	2	3	4

SECTION 4

A variety of factors are listed below which may have some bearing on the effectiveness of the relief teacher in the classroom. In the panels provided below, please write the codes of the five main factors (in order of relative importance) which you feel are most likely to negate the effectiveness of the relief teacher.

FACTOR	CODE
Inexperience of the relief teacher.....	01
Lack of knowledge of the current curriculum taught in the classroom	02
Lack of knowledge of students problems.....	03
Lack of knowledge of students' abilities.....	04
Student' perceived lack of authority of the relief teacher	05
Difference in teaching styles of regular and relief teacher.....	06
Negative student attitudes towards relief teachers.....	07
Cooperation by students.....	08
Time spent maintaining discipline.....	09
Students' inability to cope with a sudden change of teachers.....	10
Break in the routine of the classroom.....	11
Teaching in an unfamiliar area, i.e. subject area or level.....	12

FIVE MAIN FACTORS 

SECTION 5

13. This section of the questionnaire seeks your opinion about the need for teacher training for relief teaching. Please indicate your response by circling the most appropriate number.

a. Aspects of relief teaching, such as methods of presentation, procedures for using plans left by teachers and the development of resource kits and lesson plans, with activities for various classes, should be included in teacher training courses.

agree strongly	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
disagree strongly	5

b. Aspects of relief teaching such as the responsibilties of the relief teacher and approaches to discipline problems should be included in teacher training courses.

agree strongly	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
disagree strongly	5

c. Generally people wishing to work as relief teachers would benefit from orientation and training programs relating to relief teaching.

agree strongly	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
disagree strongly	5

d. Because relief teachers are transitory and so are likely to spend only short periods of time in a particular class, with little or no knowledge of students' abilities and problems and the current curriculum in the classroom, relief teaching requires a different approach from that used by the regular teacher.

agree strongly	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
disagree strongly	5

e. Some of the skills needed for relief teaching are different from those of the regular teacher.

yes.....1 no.....2

If yes, please explain your answer.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.

If you would like to make any further comments about relief teaching please do so in the space below; for example, what steps does your school take to see that relief teachers have the assistance and information they require to teach effectively or what aspects of school organisation do you as a relief teacher find most useful?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you for your cooperation in filling out this questionnaire.

J. L. Webb

Copy of letter sent prior to questionnaire

Mrs J. L. Webb
18 Trevatt Court
East Moonah
Tasmania, 7009
Date

Dear .....,

I am at present undertaking a research study which reviews several important aspects of relief teaching, such as the problems relating to relief teaching, the training of relief teachers, and the attitudes of regular staff and students towards relief teachers. The project, which is being undertaken towards a Master of Education Degree, is entitled "Relief Teaching: A Sociological Perspective."

My supervisor is Dr. Rupert Maclean from the University of Tasmania.

Part of my research involves a review of the relevant literature on the topic and also the construction and administering of a questionnaire relating to propositions arising from the literature.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to survey the opinions of administrators, regular staff members and relief teachers themselves to discover whether the propositions arising from the literature are relevant in Tasmania. May I assure you that all responses will be treated in the strictest confidence.

I propose to send you a copy of the questionnaire in the next few days and would very much appreciate your cooperation in completing and returning the questionnaire to the above address, in the stamped self addressed envelope provided, at your earliest convenience but by (date) at the latest.

If you have any queries about my request, please contact me on (002) 286717 or my supervisor on (002) 202577.

May I thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Jacqueline Webb.

Copy of letter included with questionnaire

Mrs. J.L. Webb
18 Trevatt Ct.
East Moonah
Tasmania, 7009
Date

Dear .....,

I have enclosed a survey questionnaire on relief teaching as indicated to you in my letter of the (date).

Your cooperation in filling out the questionnaire will be very much appreciated and will be of great assistance in ensuring the accuracy of the data collected.

May I assure you, as I did in my last letter, that all information will be treated in the strictest confidence.

To facilitate the return of the questionnaire, I have included a stamped, addressed envelope.

If you have any queries regarding the questionnaire please contact me on (002) 286717 or my supervisor, Dr. Maclean, on (002) 202577.

Yours faithfully,

Jacqueline Webb.

APPENDIX 3

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES FOR PILOT QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 5

ITEM RESPONSE

The following information illustrates the distribution of responses.

Section 1 of the questionnaire revealed the following information on the personal and professional backgrounds of the respondents.

Question 1: Gender

Female....	5
Male.....	0

Question 2: Professional status....

Relief teacher secondary	1
Teacher librarian	1
Relief teacher primary	2
Relief teacher infant and primary	1

Question 3: Years of training....

Four year trained	3
Three year trained	1
Five year trained	1

Question 4: Years taught as a full time teacher....

Eleven years	1
Ten years	1
Eight years	1
Six years	1
Four years	1

Question 5: Socio-economic background of the students in schools in which respondents were then currently employed....

Higher	1
Middle	2
Lower	1
All of the above	1

Question 6: Number of years as a relief teacher....

None	1
Four years	1
Five years	1
Eight	1
Eleven years	1

Question 7: Reasons for undertaking relief work

Rank Order	Option	Number of respondents
First	7a.	2
First	7c.	2
Second	7a.	1
Third	7d.	1
Fourth	7b.	1

The overall score, below, for each item was obtained by assigning the first choice with a score of 4, second 3, third 2 and fourth 1.

7a.	7b.	7c.	7d.	7.e
11	1	8	2	0

Other reasons for undertaking relief work:

- money and no other job skill
- handicapped child with no available child minder in family; goes to Cosmos but I don't want to send him there every afternoon; if he goes to a group home next year, I would probably seek part time teaching
- money, it helps me to keep abreast of current trends and maintain contact with teaching colleagues; it's a challenge
- it keeps me in touch with teaching when nothing else is available; it's a source of income, that is, it's better than nothing

Section 2 sought to gain information about attitudes towards relief teachers.

Qestion 8:

Rank Order	Item	Number of teachers
First	8a.	3
First	8b.	2
Second	8a.	1
Second	8b.	1
Second	8c.	3
Third	8a.	1
Third	8b.	2
Third	8c.	2

The overall score, below, for each item was obtained by assigning the first choice with a score of 3, second 2 and third 1.

8a.	8b.	8c.
12	10	8

Question 9:

Rank order	Item	Number of teachers
First	9b.	1
First	9c.	3
First	9d.	1
Second	9b.	3
Second	9a.	1
Second	9d.	1
Third	9a.	3
Third	9c.	1
Third	9d.	1
Fourth	9a.	1
Fourth	9b.	1
Fourth	9c.	1
Fourth	9d.	1

Overall score for each item was obtained by assigning the first choice 4,

second 3, third 2 and fourth 1.

9a.	9b	9c.	9d.
10	14	15	10

The following comments by respondents relate to their views on the role of the relief teacher.

- The role of the relief teacher is to provide a reliable alternative to the absent teacher, within the limitations of possible unfamiliarity with the school, students, rules and general philosphy. I feel that regular relief teaching at the same school (or 2 or 3) is much more efficient and more reassuring, less unsettling for the students and more satisfying and less stressful for the relief teacher. I was the regular on call relief teacher at one school for 6 years (Relief teacher, female, six years full-time , eight years relief teaching).
- Relief teachers should arrive promptly before chaos ensues, if possible, before school starts (Relief teacher, female, eleven years full-time, five years relief teaching).
- The role of the relief teacher is to provide competent back up support to the school during an absence and to fit in as well as possible with each different school (Relief teacher, female, eight years full-time, eleven years relief).

Scale	Number of teachers

Question 10a.

strongly agree	2
agree	1
uncertain	1
disagree	1
strongly disagree	0

Question 10b.

strongly agree	3
agree	1
uncertain	0
disagree	1
strongly disagree	0

	Scale	Number of teachers
Question 10c.		
	strongly agree	2
	agree	1
	uncertain	1
	disagree	1
	strongly disagree	0
Question 10d.		
	strongly agree	3
	agree	0
	uncertain	1
	disagree	1
	strongly disagree	0

Question 11 in Section 3 dealt with factors which may contribute to feelings of anxiety or apprehension amongst relief teachers. The number of reponses are listed below according to the level of anxiety.

Potential anxiety factors	high	moderate	low	non-existent
Regularity of employment	3	2	0	0
Transient nature of the job	3	1	1	0
Job satisfaction	3	1	1	0
Lack of economic and job security	5	0	0	0
Preventing discipline problems	2	1	2	0
Handling discipline problems	2	2	1	0
Negative student attitudes	4	0	1	0
Lack of knowledge of students' abilities	4	1	0	0
Lack of knowledge of students' problems	4	1	0	0
Knowledge of the current curriculum in a particular classroom	2	1	2	0
Moving students' academic learning forward	1	0	3	1

Potential anxiety factors	high	moderate	low	non-existent
Relationship with students	1	3	1	0
Providing educationally valid activities for all levels of ability in a class	0	2	3	0
Finding no lessons or inadequate lesson plans	3	0	2	0
Finding a complex lesson plan	2	0	2	1
Availability of information on school policies and procedures	3	1	1	0
Feedback from school staff	1	2	1	(1 respondent did not answer)
Being viewed as an outsider	2	0	3	0
Gaining administrative acceptance and approval	1	2	1	(1 respondent did not answer)
Gaining respect from regular teachers	1	1	3	0
Feeling isolated from school staff	2	1	1	1
Teaching in another area i.e., subject or level	3	1	1	0

Section 4 relates to factors which are likely to have some bearing on the effectiveness of the relief teacher.

Respondents were asked to select, from 12 options, the 5 main factors most likely to negate relief teacher effectiveness in the classroom. Listed below are the numbers of each factor and the number of respondents who felt these contributed to the problems facing relief teachers.

Factors	number of teachers
01 Inexperience of relief teacher	3
02 Lack of knowledge curriculum	2
03 Lack of knowledge of student's problems	3
04 Lack of knowledge of students' abilities	2
05 Perceived lack of relief teachers' authority	3
06 Differing teaching styles	2
07 Negative student attitudes	2

Factors	number of teachers
08 Cooperation by students	0
09 Time spent maintaining discipline	2
10 Students' inability to cope with change	1
11 Break in routine of the classroom	1
12 Teaching in unfamiliar subject area or level	2

Section 5 sought opinions about the need for training for relief teaching.

	Scale	Number of teachers
Question 13a.	agree strongly	4
	agree	0
	uncertain	0
	disagree	1
	disagree strongly	0
Question 13b.	agree strongly	3
	agree	1
	uncertain	1
	disagree	0
	disagree strongly	0
Question 13c.	agree strongly	4
	agree	1
	uncertain	0
	disagree	0
	disagree strongly	0
Question 13d.	yes	5
	no	0

Some comments on the need for teacher training for relief teaching covered.

- Skills range from "naming techniques" to skills in requesting and eliciting skills and information from uncooperative students. They also include "staffroom" techniques, abilities to divine cup ownership and co-opt aid from regular teachers. There is also the need for high self-esteem to overcome lack of, and poor, feedback (Female teacher, ten years full-time).
- Relief teaching requires versatility, adaptability (for example you might be in grade 3 one day and grade six the next). You

need ample resource materials at your fingertips, mental flexibility and the capacity to go to work at a moment's notice, without prior warning (Relief teacher, female, four years full-time, four years relief teaching).

- I think that a relief teacher really needs to be more skilled or often more competent than a "normal" classroom teacher, because expectations are greater and the teacher often needs to utilize more skills and strategies than the classroom teacher has to in a week. Also the teacher often needs to be very experienced to "sus" out problems with children's abilities (Relief teacher, female, eight years full-time, eleven years relief teaching).
- Relief teachers need to demonstrate super-flexibility and serenity; to be impervious to children's attempts to unnerve (or unseat!) them and not to take personally any insults which may come their way (Relief teacher, female, eleven years full-time, five years relief teaching).
- There is the need for rapid development of a working relationship for trouble free completion of set work or some valid alternative activity (if no work is set), or offering help help if private study is set. In relief teaching, this rapport has to be artificially accelerated during the course of sometimes only forty minutes- so a relief teacher has to be outgoing, adaptable, inventive and versatile and yet attempt to implement the work set in the given time (Relief teacher, female, six years full-time, eight years relief teaching).

At the end of the questionnaire respondents were invited to make further comments about relief teaching.

- I think each school should have a relief teachers kit in a folder which contains the following:

1. A statement of school policy
2. A statement of expectations of visiting teachers
3. A list of teachers' names and the classes they teach
4. A plan of the school including the toilets
5. A duty roster
6. A statement of first aid and discipline procedures if not already mentioned in 1.
7. Any further suggestions or ideas in a folder (Relief teacher, female, eight years full-time, eleven years relief teaching).

- I have found other staff members to be supportive - particularly if one makes the first move or asks for assistance. Initial visits to a school are the most stressful; becoming a familiar face helps. It is a strange quirk of relief teaching that it always involves a playground duty; this is an area where a list of rules needs to be established and clearly presented to relief staff (Relief teacher, female, eleven years full-time, five years relief teaching).

APPENDIX 4

EVALUATION AND AMENDMENTS TO QUESTIONNAIRE FORMAT

APPENDIX 6

EVALUATION AND AMENDMENTS TO QUESTIONNAIRE

In section 1, the questions remain in the tabular response mode. Three respondents noted that the instructions for completing questions 1 to 5 were not specific and that some indication as to whether respondents should tick or circle the most applicable response would be useful. Instruction have been deemed unnecessary as interviews will be conducted by this student and the responses need only to be circled.

Problems occurred in question 5 when teachers were requested to indicate the socio-economic background of the students in the schools in which they were currently employed. One of the respondents felt that this was difficult to specify if teachers taught only in a few schools. Another was unsure whether `higher' was classified as private schools only. It is hoped that this problem has been overcome by the following:

Please describe the socio-economic background of the students in the school/s in which you are or have been employed.

Instructions requesting those who were not relief teachers to proceed to item 8 raised a query about the lack of instructions for relief teachers. This instruction was deleted as relief teachers were to be the only ones interviewed.

While respondents had no problems with item 7, it has been altered from a ranking to an unstructured response so that respondents will be forced to specify their particular reasons rather than agreeing with those provided.

There were some problems with item 8 in the second section, as two respondents felt that the foreword needed to be more specific about the kind of information being sought, that is, whether it should be the respondent's opinion or attitudes that might be encountered. One of the respondents suggested that the wording could be changed from `the questionnaire seeks to obtain information about attitudes towards relief teachers' to the `questionnaire seeks to obtain information about (1) attitudes of regular teachers towards relief teachers and (2) attitudes which relief teachers believe regular teachers display towards them. 'Another change suggested for the instructions was the addition of the word `hold', so that the sentence would read `Please rank the following statements in descending order... to best coincide with your overall view of the attitudes you hold or encounter.' The word `overall' created a problem as one

respondent stated that this made the question difficult to answer if a relief teacher had not been to many schools.

The foreword for item 8 remains unaltered as the question asks teachers to give their view of the attitudes they have encountered, the word `view' relating to their perceptions of these. The word `overall' is still included within the question as relief teachers do not all work in the same schools and the answers should cover teachers' perceptions of attitudes in a number of schools. It was recommended that options 8b and 8c, relating to relief teachers being professional educators and colleagues, and lacking in official status and experience, would be better divided. The rationale for this was that a relief teacher might be considered as a professional person while still not being thought of as a colleague, and a lack of official status does not always indicate a lack of experience. This option was also criticised because of its lack of specifity. The respondent felt that this section could perhaps be more subject related, that is, a relief teacher could be seen as competent in his/her own subject area but may be adequate only in the short term in other subjects. After reviewing this question, it was decided that some of these criticisms were valid and the three options were divided into six and are now as follows:

School administrators see relief teachers as:

a. Adequate to cover the absence of the regular teacher for short periods of time

b. Adequate to cover the absent teacher for extended periods of time

c. Being professional educators

d. Being colleagues

e. Lacking in official status

f. Lacking in experience

The word `Uncertain' has been added as option g so that teachers who are unsure are not forced to make a choice. To make analysis a little less complex, respondents are asked to choose the item that best coincides with their overall view rather than ranking all six.

There were several queries relating to the options in item 9. One respondent was uncertain as to whether classroom procedures related to

lesson plans (9a). The same respondent also felt that what constitutes educationally valid activities (9b) was subject related and also dependent upon the school hierarchy and subject masters' attitudes. Option 9c created problems because, while the Tasmanian Education Department defines the relief teacher's role as one of taking over all the teaching and supervisory duties which would have been performed by the absent teacher on that day, two respondents felt that this was not always possible as lesson plans were not always available. They felt that the statement `the relief teacher should take over all teaching and supervisory duties where possible' was preferable.

So that it can be ascertained how relief teachers see their role, rather than asking them to agree with the options, question 9 has been changed to "What in your opinion, is the main role of the relief teacher?"

The scaled response questions from 10a to 10e remain although they engendered some criticism such as lack of specifity in item 10a. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statement "Generally relief teachers rarely receive adequate positive feedback from school administrators and staff." One of the respondents felt that a relief teacher might work at five schools and want to answer one of each category. She also raised the question as to whether the feedback was given on subsequent visits or the same school day. This statement remains unchanged because respondents are asked to indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with the statement on the premise of the attitudes which they encounter generally rather than specifically.

The following suggestions relate to 11 (section 3) which deals with the factors which are likely to cause apprehension or anxiety amongst relief teachers:

- the heading `Levels of apprehension' changed to 'Levels of cause of anxiety';

- `regularity of employment' changed to `irregularity'

- the calibration for the rating of stress levels should be correlated with increased stress level.

Item 11 has been altered to an unstructured response mode so that teachers have the opportunity to state the things that worry them most about relief teaching in anticipation that they will provide information

relating specifically to their anxieties

Section 4, which relates to the factors which are likely to have some bearing on the effectiveness of the relief teacher in the classroom, caused some problems for two respondents because they felt that several of the factors were inter-related and could be combined. They felt that the factors "Lack of knowledge of students' problems" (code 03) and "Lack of knowledge of students' abilities" (code 04) could be combined to become "Lack of knowledge of the students'abilities and problems." A respondent also suggested that the issues dealing with student attitudes (codes 05 to 11) were linked and could be combined to form two or three items. The inclusion of "Lack of knowledge of classroom and school routines" was considered, by the respondent, to be appropriate because not knowing about routine music, physical education, library lessons and assembly can cause havoc for a relief teacher in a new school.

This item was altered to an open-ended response so that respondents will have the opportunity to describe the main factors which they feel are most likely to negate the effectiveness of the relief teacher.

Questions 13a to 13d remain unchanged but 13e will be deleted as it is essentially the same as the preceding question. Those who express agreement with 13d will be asked to explain their answer.

Respondents identified the following issues which they felt could be included within the questionnaire:

- the vulnerability of relief teachers, who are ignorant of school rules, being involved in legal action as a result of an accident occurring in the school yard or classroom;

- whether the above situation could be considered negligence on the part of the relief teacher for not acquainting herself/himself of the rules;

- the number of schools relief teachers visit on a regular basis;

- what actions should be taken by administrators and regular teachers to ensure relief teachers are welcomed to schools and provided with the kind of assistance that can increase their effectiveness in the classroom;

- whether teachers prefer to do relief work at a number of schools or to be a regular at a few;

- the value of a bridging course which would enable relief teachers to branch out into another age group or develop extra skills; and

- further exploration of attitudes to short term training units, that is, are they desirable, willingness to participate and how they should be organised.

The suggestion relating to school staff providing assistance to relief teachers has been included in the questionnaire as item 14. Teachers are asked to give their opinions as to how this may be done so that the responses may provide a basis for the proposal of strategies which are likely to be of assistance to schools. Aspects relating to training courses have also been included in the instrument.

While the other suggestions are worthwhile, it was considered that they are not appropriate to this particular questionnaire which seeks to discover attitudes towards relief teachers rather than such legal matters as the extent of the relief teachers liability in the advent of an accident at school. At the end of the interview, respondents will be given the opportunity to make any further comments related to relief teaching.

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW FORMAT

RELIEF TEACHING

INTERVIEW COPY

SECTION ONE

We would like to commence by obtaining some information from you about certain aspects of your personal and professional background.

1. What gender are you?

Male.....1
Female.....2

2.Which of the following best describes your professional status?

Relief teacher infant.....1
Relief teacher primary..... 2
Relief teacher secondary.....3
Other (please specify).....4
.....

3. Which of the following categories best describes your teacher training?

One year trained 1
Two year trained.....2
Three year trained.....3
Four year trained.....4
Other (please specify).....6
.....

4. How many years have you taught as a full time teacher? Round up or down to the nearest whole year. ☐ years

5. Please describe the socio-economic background of the students in the school/s in which you are or have been employed.

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6. How many years have you worked as a relief teacher? Round up or down to the nearest year. ☐ years

7. What was your main reason for becoming a relief teacher?

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SECTION 2

This section of the questionnaire seeks to obtain information about attitudes towards relief teachers.

8. Which one of the following statements best coincides with your overall view of the attitudes you encounter.

School administrators and staff see relief teachers as

a. Adequate to cover the absence of the regular teacher for short periods of time ☐

b. Adequate to cover the absence of the regular teacher for extended periods of time ☐

c. Being professional educators ☐

d. Being colleagues ☐

e. Lacking in official status ☐

f. Lacking in experience ☐

9. Research relating to relief teaching indicates that there is some confusion amongst school administrators, regular staff and relief teachers themselves about the role of the relief teacher.

What, in your opinion, is the main role of the relief teacher?

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10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

a. "Generally relief teachers rarely receive adequate positive feedback from school administrators and staff."

strongly agree	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
strongly disagree	5

b. "Relief teachers are seen by school administrators and regular staff members as having a low status and prestige in the educational community."

strongly agree	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
strongly disagree	5

c. "Relief teachers are seen by students as having little or no authority."

strongly agree	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
strongly disagree	5

d. "Relief teachers feel isolated and neglected because they lack contact with school administrators and staff."

strongly agree	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
strongly disagree	5

e. "The casual relief teacher is often a stranger at a new school and is likely to find that the provision of information on school routine, timetables, lesson plans and related material, playground procedures and supervisory duties, is often neglected by regular staff."

strongly agree	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
strongly disagree	5

SECTION 3

11. What are the things which worry you most about relief teaching?

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SECTION 4

12. What, in your opinion, are the main factors most likely to negate the effectiveness of the relief teacher?

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SECTION 5

13. This section of the questionnaire seeks your opinion about the need for teacher training for relief teaching. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.

a. Some aspects of relief teaching, such as methods of presentation, procedures for using plans left by teachers and the development of resource kits and lesson plans, with activities for various classes, should be included in initial teacher training courses.

agree strongly	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
disagree strongly	5

b. Aspects of relief teaching such as the responsibilties of the relief teacher and approaches to discipline problems should be included in teacher training courses.

agree strongly	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
disagree strongly	5

c. Generally people wishing to work as relief teachers would benefit from orientation and training programs relating to relief teaching.

agree strongly	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
disagree strongly	5

d. Relief teaching requires a different approach from that used by the regular teacher.

agree strongly	1
agree	2
uncertain	3
disagree	4
disagree strongly	5

If you have expressed agreement, please explain what these different approaches might be

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14. In your opinion, what measures should school staff take to ensure that relief teachers are given the assistance and information they require to teach effectively?

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If you would like to make any further comments about relief teaching please do so in the space below.

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